Form and Transformation in Modern Chinese Poetry and Poetics

Dissertation Advisor: David Wang Brian Skerratt

Form and Transformation in Modern Chinese Poetry and Poetics

Abstract

Hu Shi began the modern Chinese New Poetry movement by calling for the liberation of poetic forms, but what constitutes "form" and how best to approach its liberation have remained difficult issues, as the apparent material, objective reality of literary form is shown to be deeply embedded both culturally and historically. This dissertation presents five movements of the dialectic between form and history, each illustrated by case studies drawn from the theory and practice of modern Chinese poetry: first, the highly political and self-contradictory demand for linguistic transparency; second, the discourse surrounding poetic obscurity and alternative approaches to the question of "meaning"; third, a theory of poetry based on its musicality and a reading practice that emphasizes sameness over difference; four, poetry's status as "untranslatable" as against Chinese poetry's reputation as "already translated"; and fifth, the implications of an "iconic" view of poetic language. By reading a selection of poets and schools through the lens of their approaches to form, I allow the radical difference within the tradition to eclipse the more familiar contrast of modern Chinese poetry with its foreign and pre-modern others. My dissertation represents a preliminary step towards a historically-informed formalism in the study of modern Chinese literature.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

It says something about my personality that an acknowledgements section, to me, can be nothing other than a list of the people I am most terrified of disappointing—people whose generosity and kindness I feel so unworthy of having received that no work of scholarship, least of all any that I am capable of writing, could begin to erase that debt. So it is with sincere humility that I first acknowledge the perpetual support of my advisor, David Wang. Somehow it was always at the darkest moments of the process that I would crawl out from under my rock and into Wang laoshi's office, only to find that he was not only still invested in me and my project, but that he was even brimming with ideas and suggestions for improvements and extensions to the work I had been ready to discard just moments before. To have him put his faith in me when I did not always share that faith was and is a supremely humbling experience, and so it is to him that I dedicate this dissertation.

I also wish to thank those other teachers who supported, encouraged, and influenced me during my years working on this Ph.D. In terms of unflagging faith, the only one to rival Professor Wang would be his primary school classmate, Michelle Yeh, without whom this project would never have begun, let alone finished. No one has challenged me intellectually more than Stephen Owen, whom I would also like to thank for helping to advise this dissertation. I profited greatly from my interactions, in and out of the classroom, with Eileen Chow, Wilt Idema, Wai-Yee Li, Xiaofei Tian, Sarah Allen, Zeb Raft, Matthew Fraleigh, Daniel Albright, Despina Kakoudaki, Christopher Johnson, Michel Hockx, Lucas Klein, Hu Siao-chen, Mei Chia-ling, and Ann Huss. Before I came to Harvard, I was inspired by the teaching of Craig Dworkin, Michael Golston, Shang Wei, Bruce Robbins, and Seiichi Makino. I want to thank the entire staff of EALC, especially Jim Zigo, Susan Kashiwa, Denise Oberdan, and Gus Espada; the staff of the Harvard-Yenching Library; and the staff of the Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, especially Ellen Sarkisian and Virginia Maurer.

It is fair to say that I have learned even more, academically and personally, from my classmates and friends at Harvard and elsewhere than I have from my illustrious professors and advisors. Above all, I wish to thank two dear friends and brilliant humans, Will Hedberg and Ariel Fox, who truly understand me best. I am also grateful for the help and support of my dissertation group-mates, who read my work when it was least well-formed: Jie Li, Ying Qian, Angie Lai, Andrew Rodekohr, Erin Schlumpf, John Kim, Satoru Hashimoto, Tarryn Chun, and Casey Lee. Special thanks are due to May-yi Shaw and Nic Testerman, who were there for me in the final stretch, when I most needed support.

For their love and friendship, I want to thank Rob and Molly Morris, Ana Olenina, Alexis Schulman, Barbara Geoghegan, Andrea and Cat Pien, Katie Carmody, Tracy Hwang, Laura Bohn, Erin Kappeler, Zack Stinson, Dan Iglesia, Lulu Hansen, Ren-Yuan Li, Jon Schlesinger, Rob Ward, Heidi Steinberg, and May Yang. Last, I want to thank my dear mother and father, Andrea and William; my grandmother Rose-Marie; my aunt Kathy; my sister Laura and brother-in-law Shaheed; and my beautiful niece Zoey.

The landlord says: “The hardest thing is starting.”
The landlord also says: “Even harder is finishing.”

房東說：‘最難的是開始’
房東又說：‘更難的是結束’

Hsia Yü 夏宇, *“The Music and the Steps”* 舞和音樂

Chapter 1
Transparency

An Introduction

Form and Chinese Modernity

In December of 1953, Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 (1910-2000) presented a talk entitled "The Rhythm of Chanting (Song) and the Rhythm of Speech (Recitation)" 哼唱型節奏（吟調）和説話型節奏（誦調）at a panel on the problem of poetic form. In his talk, Bian discusses two lines of poetry he had noticed in a recent issue of *Popular Poetry* 大眾詩歌 celebrating the 1949 Revolution:

> 革命大成功，百姓坐朝廷　　*Geming | da chenggong,/ baixing | zuo chaoting.*
>
> The revolution has greatly succeeded,
> The people sit in the court.[1]

Bian points out the irony that this ode to the revolutionary founding of new China unwittingly and out of habit reproduces the metrical structure of classical pentasyllabic verse (*wuyan ju* 五言句), where each line consists of a group of two syllables followed by a group of three. How could someone celebrate the final liberation of the Chinese people in a verse form handed down by generations of aristocratic, Confucian literati? Bian suggests revising

1 Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, "Hengchangxing jiezou (yindiao) he shuohuaxing jiezou (songdiao)" 哼唱型節奏（吟調）和説話型節奏（誦調）, *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中國現代詩論, ed. Yang Kuanghan 楊匡漢 and Liu Fuchun 劉富春 (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1986)): 2.9.

the couplet from the traditional 2+3 syllable meter to 3+2, a meter which would have been highly unusual in classical poetry:

> 大革命成功，老百姓當朝　　*Da geming | chenggong,/ Laobaixing | dangchao.*
>
> The great revolution has succeeded,
> The people occupy the throne.[2]

The revised version is a craftsman's solution: the seasoned poet has no trouble thinking of a three-syllable synonym for "common people" (*laobaixing* for *baixing*) and a pithier, two-syllable word (*dangchao*, "hold authority") for a longer verb phrase (*zuo chaoting*, "sit in the court"). The meaning and its implications—even the lines' tonal pattern—are basically unaltered; only the metrical structure has changed, but that simple alteration represents, for Bian, a critical shift. Put a group of three syllables before a group of two and you are progressive, modern, revolutionary; put two syllables before three and you are conservative, reactionary, a slave to tradition.

In critiquing this verse for its meter, Bian reflects a number of cherished beliefs held by Chinese intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century. First, for the "great revolution" to "succeed," one must clearly differentiate past and present, old and new, and renovate wherever possible. A modern era needs a modern literature; to write in a manner proper to the historical past during the modern present is at best anachronistic, or at worst reactionary. Second, and more subtly, Bian reflects the belief that the form of a poem must reflect its content, and that a dissonance between form and content is enough to undermine

2 Ibid.

the coherence of a work of literature. The subordination of form to content was a cliché dating from the early days of the New Culture movement. In general, though vernacular poets of the Republican period differed widely in their views on poetic form, May Fourth intellectuals' antagonistic attitude towards the cultural products that had come before implied a profound distrust of formal constraint and a strong emphasis on the content of a work, on its message. Even for Bian, whose interest in metrical form will be discussed more below, the form cannot contradict the meaning.

At the same time, there is an ambivalence in this position: form is treated as a secondary, incidental or decorative element of poetry, subordinate to the meaning of the words, while at the same time, it is significant enough to demand renovation for a modern context. The fact that Bian can alter the form of a poem without changing its literal meaning suggests that form and content are relatively independent and separable; yet the fact that Bian detects a tension between the two and wishes to resolve it suggests that form itself means something, and that the meaning of form is not something that can be dismissed. Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) inaugurated the New Poetry (*Xinshi* 新詩) movement by declaring that "any revolutionary movement in literature, whether old or new, Chinese or foreign, probably has to start with respect to literary form; it probably has first to demand the liberation of language, words, genres, and formal conventions" 文學革命的運動，不論古今中外，大概都是從文的形式一方面下手，大概都是先要求語言文字文體等方面的

大解放.[3] Hu's goals of "revolution" and "liberation" are figured negatively, so that one can only identify the sources of oppression and eliminate them. Freedom is proven by the absence of those oppressive forces, which explains Bian's reaction to the couplet discussed above. Any meter would do, as long as it is not one of the old ones. By proposing to take the familiar metrical rhythm and simply invert it, Bian is deliberately and self-consciously subverting a certain expectation of the reader, but the technique would depend on the persistence of that expectation, on the continued hegemony of classical meters, for its full effect. This is a liberation through negation which always preserves the specter of oppression.

Hu Shi memorably compared this kind of liberation to unbinding a woman's feet; in the preface to the fourth edition of his first collection of vernacular poetry, *Experiments* 嘗試集, Hu wrote, "When now I look back at my poetry of these five years, I am much like a woman whose feet were once bound, looking at her shoes from over the years. Although each year's shoes are bigger than the last, they all still have a bit of the stench of the footbinding era in them" 我現在回頭看我這五年來的詩，很像一個纏過腳後來放大了的婦人回頭看他一年一年的放腳鞋樣，雖然一年放大一年，年年的鞋樣上總還帶著纏腳時代的血腥氣.[4] To the modern poet of vernacular New Poetry, classical verse forms were something that lay in the subconscious, impossible to eradicate; they were ideological

3 Hu Shi, "Tan xinshi" 談新詩, *Hu Shi quanji* 胡適全集 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003): 1.159.

4 Hu Shi, "*Changshi ji* siban xu" 嘗試集四版序, *Hu Shi quan ji* 胡適全集 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003) 2.813.

"cangues and fetters" 枷鎖鐐銬[5] that kept one chained to the past.

Bian Zhilin's view was more complex, however. Bian was not just opposed to the unwitting replication of classical forms; he was hoping to advocate for a more mindful, studied approach to poetic forms both old and new.

> No one has any idea why more and more poets are writing vernacular poems with four lines to the stanza, and no one cares what kind of attention that form requires, unless it's to scrape together some end-rhymes. I guess they're just concerned about freedom.
>
> 大家都不知道為甚麼越來越多的傾向於寫四行一節的白話詩，也不在乎其中有甚麼需要講究，除非想到要湊幾個腳韻。大概是只要求自由吧.[6]

Bian was a careful student of prosody; he wrote extensively on the nature of metrical units in vernacular Chinese (organized, according to the system he favored, into units called *dun* 頓, similar to metrical feet in European languages but divided according to word and phrase boundaries) and considered what metrical arrangements were best suited to everyday speech, to recitation, to chanting, and so on.

> [We study prosody] so that when we use a spoken style to "read" or "recite" vernacular new-style poems, rather than "chanting" at will or "singing" from a score, we don't fail to evince the *intrinsic* properties and *objective* rules of poetry *itself*, as a temporal and auditory artform, so we don't leave the reciter with no [rhythm] to rely on, as in spoken dramatic dialog or oration. Let us freely create according to each [poet's] talent, to express the pulse, rhythm, and even the melody of music.
>
> 這都是為了在我們既不是隨意來"吟"或"哼"，也不是按曲譜來"唱"，而是按說話方式來"念"或"朗誦"白話新體詩的時候，不致顯不出像詩本身作為時間藝術 聽覺藝術所含有的內在因素 客觀規律，而只像話劇台詞或鼓動演說，使朗誦者無所依據，就憑各自的才能，自由創造，以表達音樂一樣的節拍、節奏以至於旋律.

5 *Hu Shi quanji* 1.160.

6 Bian Zhilin, "Wancheng yu kaiduan: jinian Wen Yiduo bashi shengchen" 完成與開端：紀念詩人聞一多八十生辰, *Ren yu shi: yijiu shuoxin* 人與詩:憶舊說新 (Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian, 1984): 15.

[7]

On the one hand, Bian insists on attention to the "intrinsic properties and objective rules" of poetic language, especially insofar as it is special and unlike other forms of literary or non-literary language, while on the other hand, he emphasizes "free creation" 自由創造. Bian, who says that he often likes to repeat the aphorism that "freedom is the recognition of necessity" 自由是對於必然的認識,[8] suggests that true freedom is not to be found in an absence of constraints, but rather in the full recognition of those constraints which cannot be changed. Here he sounds very much like Wen, who famously compared writing poetry in set metrical forms to dancing in shackles, claiming that "only someone who can't dance would feel hindered by the shackles" 只有不會跳舞的才怪腳鐐礙事.[9] This articulation of freedom, attained by the negotiation of necessity and scientific fact, differs dramatically from the promise of freedom offered by Hu Shi's originary writings on literary revolution, achieved through the destruction of traditional bonds.

7 Bian Zhilin, "Zixu" 自序, *Diaochong jili: 1930-1958* 雕蟲紀曆（1930－1958）(Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1979): 14. Emphasis in original.

8 "Wancheng yu kaiduan" 15.

9 Wen Yiduo 聞 一多, "Shi de gelü" 詩的格律, *Wen Yiduo quan ji* 聞一多全集 (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1994) 2.139.

Hu Shi's comparison of traditional poetic meters to footbinding was more than just a metaphor; he considered both to be constraints handed down from oppressive Chinese tradition. In a 1933 speech at the University of Chicago, Hu describes the goals of the May Fourth movement as follows:

> it was a movement of conscious protest against many of the ideas and institutions in the traditional culture, and of conscious emancipation of the individual man and woman from the bondage forces of tradition. It was a movement of reason versus tradition, freedom versus authority, and glorification of life and human values versus their suppression.[10]

The narratives of individual and national liberation that accompany much of the cultural production of twentieth-century China must be viewed with as much skepticism as those that accompanied the European Enlightenment. Traditional cultural practices may have been constrictive and oppressive, but institutionally-enforced modernity has been, and is today, no less coercive. In one critique of the "liberated" modern youth and his literary tastes, Wen Yiduo skewers the obsession with "self-expression" en vogue in the 1920s:

> They use words as their tools of expression, but this is incidental; their main concern is to expose their 'inner selves', to let the world know that they are supremely talented, sorrowful, and afflicted youth. At the same time, they gaze at their own dashing figures in literature's mirror, with a sentimental tear in their eye, ah! ah! How fascinating! How romantic! Yes, what they call "romanticism" is romantic in this sense and has nothing to do with literary

10 Quoted in Ying-shih Yü, "Neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment," *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, ed. Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Oldřich Král (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001): 300.

Romanticism.

> 他們用了文字作表現的工具，不過是偶然的事，他們最稱心的工作是把所謂“自我”披露出來，是讓世界知道“我”也是一個多才多藝，善病工愁的少年；並且在文藝的鏡子裡照見自己那倜儻的風姿，還帶着幾滴多情的眼淚，啊！啊！那是多麼有趣的事！多麼浪漫！不錯，他們所謂浪漫主義，正浪漫在這點上，和文藝的派別絕不發生關係.[11]

In Althusser's understanding of ideology, "Those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology; one of the effects of ideology is the practical *denigration* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology"[12]; the subject of May Fourth enlightenment believes himself to be liberated while those who follow alternative cultural practices are not. In this case, declaring oneself free from constraint is a kind of performance, a role-play, whose costume and mannerisms are firmly pre-determined. If old-fashioned poets slavishly adhering to complicated traditional verse forms are nothing more than automata, plugging words into set forms, then neither are the young iconoclasts sighing about "freedom" actually free.

An aversion to artifice is the necessary obverse to an obsession with authenticity, what I will call a "regime of transparency," the demand that literature and language reflect the truth "honestly" or "transparently." Whether that supposed truth is subjective and internal (as in lyric poetry) or objective and external (as in epic poetry or Realist fiction), there is little room for the writer's own undisguised artifice. Marjorie Perloff, writing about an opposition

11 Wen Yiduo, "Shi de gelü" 詩的格律, *Wen Yiduo quanji* 聞一多全集 (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1994): 2.139.

12 Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972): 175.

between mainstream and marginal poetic discourses in American poetry, argues that under such a regime,

> Subject matter ... is all. At the same time, poets ... who believe that oppositionality has to do, not only with what a poem says, but with the formal, modal, and generic choices it makes—its use, say, of a non-traditional rhythmic base, a particular vernacular, or an incorporation of cited nonpoetic material—these poets continue to be relegated to the margins.[13]

If the denigration of poetic forms was, initially at least, about "liberation," the demand to be already liberated becomes a new kind of imprisonment. By yoking poetic versification to a discourse of revolution and liberation, what kinds of poetries have been discouraged or ignored? What sort of alternative poetic modernities can we imagine beyond the dominant May Fourth enlightenment paradigm?

The Linguistic Turn

In a 2010 article, poet and scholar Henry Zhao (a.k.a. Zhao Yiheng 趙毅衡, b. 1943) points out that China has mostly missed out on the formalist methodologies that have been so influential in the Western academy through much of the twentieth century. "Looking back on the changes in Chinese literary thought over the past sixty years, it looks as though the 'linguistic turn' never occurred in China, and one can't really say that formalist criticism ever had solid footing" 回顧六十年中國文藝思想的變遷，看起來語言轉折在

13 Marjorie Perloff, *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991): 11.

中國幾乎沒有發生過，形式文論很難說站住過腳.[14] Borrowing the phrase from Richard Rorty's 1967 anthology of philosophical essays, Zhao suggests that we might be able to "fill in" (*bu* 補) this gap in modern Chinese intellectual history. Zhao—who himself studied with Bian Zhilin and wrote about New Criticism in the early 1980s under Bian's supervision[15]—lays out a detailed history of New Criticism, structuralism, narratology, and semiology in China and Taiwan: from the long-term stays in China of I.A. Richards and William Empson, to the literary criticism of Li Changzhi 李長之 and Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, Qian Zhongshu's 錢鍾書 *On the Art of Poetry* 談藝錄, the poetry criticism of Yuan Kejia 袁可嘉, Yang Zhouhan's 楊周翰 criticism of Wang Meng's 王蒙 novels, and so on. In fact, it is not such a destitute tradition after all—"richer than we imagine" 比我們想象的富厚[16]—despite the considerable obstacles faced by these schools of thought.

Formalist criticism was disparaged from the 1950s to '70s, Zhao contends, because "paying attention to form means destroying the work's mystery and encouraging critical reading: a text which is viewed as an assemblage of words and signs cannot enjoy the glory of wholeness, nor can it possess the truthfulness that comes from 'reflecting reality'" 關注形式，必然破壞作品的神祕，必然導致批判性的閱讀：文本如果被視為語言和符號的集合，

14 Zhao Yiheng 趙毅衡, "Women xuyao bu yige 'yuyan zhuanzhe' ma?" 我們需要補一個「語言轉折」嗎？ *Yijiusijiu yihou* 一九四九以後, ed. Wang Dewei 王德威, Chen Sihe, 陳思和, and Xu Zidong 許子東 (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2010): 313-323.

15 Ibid. 316.

16 Ibid. 313.

就不可能享有完整性的光彩，也不可能具有「反映現實」而獲得的真理性.[17] The resistance to analysis described here is not unique to China or this period—Zhao's shift in terminology over the course of that sentence from "work" (*zuopin* 作品) to "text" (*wenben* 文本) subtly reminds the reader of the same demythologization in European literature, described and enacted by Roland Barthes's programmatic essay "From Work to Text." But Zhao also finds Chinese intellectual climes to be inhospitable to formalist criticism for their own unique reasons. Pre-existing philosophical traditions in China, he claims, differed fundamentally from formalist thought:

> Traditional Chinese criticism emphasized intuition. The traditional reverence for concrete appearances [as opposed to abstractions] emphasized perception, while the discourse of *jingjie*[18] emphasized experience; in the study of narrative literature, interlineal commentary is the defining feature of Chinese fiction criticism, whose stress is on intuition—it is not the careful, detailed logical analysis of the West.
>
> 中國傳統批評注重直覺，「尚象」思維重感悟，「境界」之説重體驗；在敍述文學的研究中，評點成為中國小説批評的特色。評點家的文字重在直覺，而非西方那種周密細緻的邏輯分析.[19]

The distinction between Western precision and Chinese vagueness seems to be a primary motivation behind Zhao's call for a linguistic turn, as he says "Structuralism is essentially different from traditional Chinese ways of thinking; it was difficult for it to become popular in Chinese academic circles accustomed to rough, imprecise concepts" 結構主義本質上與

17 Ibid. 313.

18 The term *jingjie* 境界, central to the aesthetic philosophy of Wang Guowei 王國維, among others, has been translated as "the world," but also includes subjective and moral connotations. See Jiang Wu, "What is *Jingjie*? Defining Confucian Spirituality in the Modern Chinese Intellectual Context," *Monumenta Serica* 50 (2002): 441-462.

19 Ibid. 322.

中國傳統思維方式相差，它很難在習慣於粗疏概念的中國學界流行起來.[20]

Zhao's argument is vulnerable to charges of Orientalism or Eurocentrism, but he also finds a powerful justification for formalism from within the Chinese context:

> The interest in formalist criticism in the Chinese academy during the early 1980s was partly an effort to escape the set systems of authoritative thought and academic models, but more importantly, formalist criticism lacked any apparent ideological color. On a background of solid red, 'colorless' is itself a deep color.
>
> 八十年代上半期的中國學術界對形式文論的興趣，一方面是為了擺脱既定的權威思想體系和學術規範外，更重要的在於，形式文論沒有鮮明的意識形態色彩，在大紅色背景上，無色彩本身就是濃重的色彩.[21]

Zhao's phrasing, "*apparent* ideological color" 鮮明的意識形態色彩, is key. He does not deny that formalist criticism has its ideological color, but in his view, it does, or did, escape the constraints of the pre-existing paradigms post-Cultural Revolution; formalist criticism could serve as a Barthesian "neutral" which confounded the existing paradigm. Zhao does not seem to wish to deny the social content of literature or evade questions of politics entirely; he just wishes to remind us, paraphrasing Yang Zhouhan, that literature "proceeds from form to content" 從形式到內容.[22]

What would it mean to "fill in" a linguistic turn in Chinese intellectual history? In this formulation of the problem, formalist criticism might take on the logic of the Derridean *supplement* (Chinese: *tibu* 替補): does formalist criticism enrich the existing literary discourse

20 Ibid. 317.

21 "Women xuyao bu yige 'yuyan zhuanzhe' ma?" 316.

22 Ibid.

in China, "a plenitude enriching another plenitude," or does it counterbalance and overturn that discourse, "add[ing] only to replace"?[23] Does Zhao project a lack onto Chinese scholarship based on his reading of Western scholarship? Is Zhao's understanding of literary history painfully Eurocentric, fatally teleological? To a certain extent, the answer depends on our understanding of form. Is it an objective fact of literature, or a cultural, textual, discursive construct? "Form" cannot have the same place in one culture's literary tradition as it has in another's; not only do forms have histories (as the sonnet), "form" itself has a history.

A genealogy of form, in the Western context, reveals ambivalences in the term's connotations that contain the seeds of later debates over formalism. In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams locates two early meanings of the English word "form" which followed from its Latin origins: on the one hand, form is "(i) a visible or outward shape, with a strong sense of the physical body, ... [as in] 'form is most frayle, a fading flattering showe,'"; at the same time, it is "(ii) an essential shaping principle, making indeterminate material into a determinate or specific being or thing: 'the body was only mat[t]er, of which (the soul) were the fourme.'"[24] In the first definition, the form of something is only its superficial, visible aspect, while its essential, animating substance lies beneath the surface, whereas in the second definition, the form is the "essential shaping principle" that allows the otherwise incidental material to take shape. In literary studies, Williams continues, formalism's

23 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976): 144-5.

24 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976): 113.

> predominant emphasis was on the specific, intrinsic characteristics of a literary work, which required analysis 'in its own terms' before any other kind of discussion, and especially social or ideological analysis, was relevant or even possible. The intricacies of the subsequent argument are extraordinary. There was a simple opposition (bringing into play a received distinction between [the first definition of] form ... and content) between a formalism limited to 'purely' aesthetic ... interests and a Marxism concerned with social content and ideological tendency.[25]

Thus the "formal" has been associated in literary studies with the purely aesthetic or textual, while its opposite term ("content") must be identified with the social, historical, ideological. Stephen Cohen sees this opposition as the basis for no less than the entire history of modern academic literary study: "Without overmuch simplification, the institutional history of literary studies over the last hundred or so years can be characterized as a series of agonistic oscillations between the discipline's two mighty opposites, form and history."[26]

As Cohen also points out, however, "in practice, of course, none of these critical methods was so absolute as to exclude entirely either form or history."[27] From the formalist perspective, form itself—its categories of identity and difference—is historically and culturally constrained, so that what constitutes a distinctive feature in one context may be incidental in another, and what counts as identity in one place may be difference somewhere else. Whereas structuralist literary theory suggests that it might be possible to create an objective "discovery procedure"—formal procedures by which one could discover and

25 Ibid. 114.

26 Stephen Cohen, "Introduction" in *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007) 1. For example, he notes the trajectory from "old," positivistic historicism to New Criticism and then to New Historicism, or from structuralism/poststructuralism to cultural studies to "the revenge of the aesthetic."

27 Ibid.

describe exhaustively the patterns of an unknown *langue*—for locating significant patterns in a text, Jonathan Culler disagrees:

> To suggest that the methods of phonological analysis give us a procedure for the discovery of poetic patterns begs more questions than it resolves. ... What will count as a relationship of equivalence? How many distinctive features must two phonemes share if they are to count as related? How far apart can two phonemes be if their relationship is to take effect, and is this distance proportional to the number of distinctive features they share or does it depend on syntactic and semantic considerations?[28]

In order to understand the form, its structures of identity and difference, we must already have some knowledge of the content; Culler writes that

> even in its own province the task of linguistics is not to tell us what sentences mean; it is rather to explain how they have the meanings which speakers of a language give them. If linguistic analysis were to propose meanings which speakers of the language could not accept, it would be the linguists who were wrong, not the speakers.[29]

From the historicist side as well, the social and ideological content of a work depends for its expression on formal elements. What we are left with is what Ellen Rooney calls "a paradox in the sense that Michel Foucault applied to the notion of discontinuity: form is 'both an instrument and an object of research.... it divides up the field of which it is an effect.' The problem of form encompasses our efforts to resolve it."[30]

For this reason, an attempt to account for modern Chinese poetry cannot take form for granted, either as an incidental embellishment or as itself an object of interpretation, but rather must necessarily deal with form in its rich historical and ideological context. At the

28 Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002): 76.

29 Ibid. 86.

30 Ellen Rooney, "Form and Contentment," *Modern Language Quarterly* 61 (Mar. 2000): 18.

same time, the very problems of Chinese modernity—the possibility of reform or revolution, of adapting Western learning to a Chinese setting, of writing in a semicolonial or postcolonial condition—are themselves questions of separating essence from appearance, form from content. In other words, consistent with the paradox of form and history within literary study, the larger questions of Chinese modernity that encompass the problematic of the form and content of literature *are themselves* questions of form. To demonstrate this point, let us consider, in addition to the May Fourth literary revolution, another "revolution": the "revolution in the realm of poetry" 詩界革命 advertised by the prominent reformers of the last two decades of the Qing—Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848-1905), and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929)—both of whom considered carefully the implications of revolution with respect to poetic form, and vice-versa.

Re: form

As one of the poets most closely associated with Liang Qichao's poetic revolution, Huang Zunxian was preoccupied with negotiating past and present, form and content. In the preface to *Draft of Poems from the Cottage in the Human Realm* 人竟廬詩草字序, written in 1891, Huang expresses both frustration and hope towards his relationship with literary tradition, especially how to manage form *ti* 體 and "spirit" *shen* 神. In a passage that in retrospect seems like a warning to the May Fourth vernacular poets, he writes: "I was born after the ancients. Out of ancient poets, there are probably well over a hundred who could be

called great masters. If one wishes to discard the 'dregs of the ancients' and not be constrained by what they did, this is truly an arduous task" 士生古人之後。古人之詩。號專門名家者。無慮百數十家。欲棄去古人之糟粕。而不為古人所束縛。誠戛戛其難.[31] At the same time, Huang had several prescriptions for how to "discard the dregs" while still hanging on to what was valuable from the poetic tradition:

> I have established a realm of poetry in my breast. For one thing, I have returned to the form of metaphor and allegory employed by the ancients. For another, I set the form of parallel couplets in motion with the spirit of what is singular.[32] Third, I take up the spirit and logic of the *Lisao* and *yuefu* without copying their appearance. Last, I adopt the Ancient Prose masters' method of expansion and contraction, separating and joining, and adapt it for poetry.
>
> 嘗於胸中設一詩境。一曰。復古人比興之體。一曰。以單行之神。運排偶之體。一曰。取離騷樂府之神理而不襲其貌。一曰。用古文家伸縮離合之法以入詩.[33]

In this passage, Huang has set up several critical distinctions: "form" (*ti*) is placed in opposition to "spirit" (*shen*), which in turn is grouped alongside "logic" *li* 理 in opposition to "appearance" *mao* 貌. Form, to Huang, is the superficial appearance of poetry, while something more essential lies elsewhere, in the spirit or logic. This configuration predicts Liang Qichao's later argument in his 1902 *Poetry Talks from the Ice-Drinker's Studio* 飲冰室

31 Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲, *Renjinglu shicao jianzhu* 人境盧詩草箋註 (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1973) 1. The preface has been translated into English by Michelle Yeh in Kirk Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996): 69-70 and J.D. Schmidt, *Within the Human Realm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 51. We will return to this passage again below.

32 Yeh and Schmidt disagree on the interpretation of the phrase *dan hang* or *dan xing* 單行. For Schmidt, it refers to "nonparallel writing," i.e. "single"- or "odd"-lined writing. Yeh translates "individual" according to the common meaning of this compound, meaning proceeding alone or in one direction. I believe that, either way, *dan hang*/*dan xing* is placed in opposition to *paiou* "parallel couplets," so my translation attempts to reflect the opposition of parallel and single without specifying what is "single."

33 *Renjinglu shicao* 1. Emphasis added.

詩話:

> In a time of transition, there is necessarily revolution. But a revolution must reform the spirit and not [just] the form. Lately we often speak of a revolution in the realm of poetry, but if one considers revolution to be a page covered in piles of new vocabulary, that is no different from the Manchu government's superficial legal reforms or "restoration." To express new ideas in the old style, that is the actuality of revolution.
>
> 過渡時代。必有革命。然革命者當革其精神。非革其形式。吾黨近好言詩界革命。雖然。若以堆積滿紙新名詞為革命。是又滿州政府變法維新之類也。能以舊風格含新意境。斯可以舉革命之實矣.[34]

Both Huang and Liang consider what they call "spirit" to be the essential aspect, while "form" is merely a kind of superficial appearance, *mao*—recalling Raymond Williams's double-reading of "form," we can observe Huang and Liang favoring the first reading, where form is a shell for the essential spirit. Liang uses the now-common term for form, *xingshi* 形式, which overlaps to a certain extent with the broader and more complicated term *ti*, used by Huang.

Many of the ambivalences and contradictions contained in the Western word "form" are, in fact, closely mirrored by the Chinese term *ti*. The basic meanings of *ti* as attested in the *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大辭典 revolve around the physical body (*shenti* 身體) and the physical forms of things (*xingti* 形體). Two related sets of contradictions arise, however, in its extended meanings. On the one hand, *ti* refers to the "entirety" (*zhengti* 整體; *zongti* 總體), while on the other hand, it may refer to the "main part of a thing" 事物的主要部分 (as in *zhuti* 主體, "subject," as of an action or of a piece of writing). Second, *ti* refers to the exterior

34 Liang Qichao 梁起超, *Yinbingshi wenji* 飲冰室文集 (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1960): 45.41.

appearance of a thing (*waiguan xingshi* 外觀形式); it also refers to "content" (*neirong* 內容). Stephen Owen defines *ti* as the outward, material or literary manifestation of an inward individuating nature (*xing* 性);[35] its meanings in the context of writing can range from "normative form" to "genre" to "style." The breadth of *ti*'s meanings is apparent in Huang's preface, where he speaks not only of "the form of parallel couplets" 排偶之體, but also "the form of metaphor and allegory employed by the ancients" 古人比興之體. Yet Huang's contrast between *shen* and *ti* is analogous to Liang's contrast between *shen* and *xingshi*: changing the form will not create a revolution; it is the "spirit" or "logic" or "ideas" that we must renovate.

Poetic revolution thus formulated inescapably involves questions of form and content, of the essential and the incidental. The apparent contradiction in the phrase "Chinese modernity," deriving from the association of Chinese-ness with the old and unchanging, requires for resolution an essentializing gesture: can some Chinese essence survive a process of modernization? The famous slogan which paraphrases the *Exhortation to Study* 勸學篇 of Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909), for instance, advocates "Chinese learning for essence [*ti*]; Western learning for utility" 中學為體；西學為用;[36] in this case, the *ti* is still the thing that remains constant during change, as in Liang and Huang's poetic

35 Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992): 210.

36 Edward Gunn, *Rewriting Chinese: Style and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Chinese Prose* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991): 33.

revolution, but instead of being something incidental, a "mere form," *ti* is exactly the Chinese "essence" that must be preserved despite a modernization driven by Western learning. The ambivalence of *ti*, like the ambivalence of the word "form," is further expressed in the Chinese translation of "revolution." Liang's term for revolution, *geming* 革命, comes from the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) and means literally "stripping the Mandate [of Heaven]."[37] The character *ge* refers at root to animal hide that has been stripped of fur and processed as leather, and also to the process of stripping away the fur and other undesired materials during manufacture. *Ge* is what you do and *ge* is also what you get; only by removing what is unwanted can one arrive at an improved version of what is essential. Yet Liang's statement on poetic revolution represents another, paradoxical approach to the same problem: if you change what is essential (the spirit), then you don't have to worry about changing the appearance (the form). If poetic form is incidental to the "actuality of revolution," then why is it the one thing that stays the same? The understanding of form's place in poetry is almost the opposite of those contained in Hu Shi's 1916 essays and Bian Zhilin's 1953 talk; the late Qing Poetic Revolution and the May Fourth literary revolution, differ not in the degree to which they endeavored to revolutionize poetry, but rather in their determination of what was necessary for revolution, particularly in their understanding of form as essential or incidental.

Like Liang, Huang, though he does not use the term *geming*, also struggles with

37 Schmidt 48.

sifting out the inessential from the poetry of previous eras. Let us return to the complaint that began this discussion: "If one wishes to discard the 'dregs of the ancients' and not be constrained by what they did, this is truly an arduous task." The phrase "dregs of the ancients" 古人之糟粕 comes from the story of Wheelwright Bian 輪扁 in the *Zhuangzi*, where Bian argues that anything that can be written down in a book cannot be worth much, since in making wheels, what is essential must be learned hands-on. On the one hand, we may not want to apply the allusion too strictly, since for Huang, both the essential poetic knowledge and the dregs to be discarded come from ancient books. On the other hand, Huang expresses an extremely relativistic view of history that is, in some ways, nearly as radical as Wheelwright Bian's. When Huang speaks of "discard[ing] the 'dregs of the ancients' and not be[ing] constrained" by what they did, he is also referring to one of his own poems, the second of the *Random Feelings* 雜感 poems:

> The gods gave form to Chaos
> And set the heavens turning.
> Not even Lishou[38] could count
> How many thousands of years it's been.
> Fu Xi and the Yellow Emperor[39] invented writing
> Five thousand years before today;
> But to those who will come after me,
> I am like an ancient of high antiquity.
> Vulgar Confucians love to worship the past;
> Every day they burrow into old papers.
> If a word doesn't appear in the Six Classics,
> They don't dare to use it in their poems.
> The dregs discarded by the ancients

38 According to legend, Lishou 隸首 invented mathematics.

39 Fu Xi 伏羲 and the Yellow Emperor 黃帝 (also known as Xuanyuan 軒轅) were legendary emperors of China, who each, according to different sources, invented writing.

Make their mouths water.
They habitually rob from others out of habit
And recklessly commit all manner of crimes.
Nüwa made us all out of the yellow earth,
So how could we moderns be better or worse than the ancients?
Today will be antiquity before long;
At what point can you draw a line?
Radiant light streams in my window,
My censor burns with smoke.
On my left is placed my fine inkstone,
And on my right lies pages of the best paper.
My hand writes what my mouth says—
How could I be constrained by the ancients!
After all, today's slang,
If I put it down on paper,
Will become august classical literature
For people five thousands years in the future.

大塊鑿混沌，渾渾旋大圜；
隸首不能算，知有幾萬年。
羲軒造書契，今始歲五千；
以我視後人，若居三代先。
俗儒好尊古，日日故紙研；
六經字所无，不敢入詩篇。
古人棄糟粕，見之口流涎；
沿習甘剽盜，妄造從罪愆。
黃土同摶人，今古何愚賢；
即今忽已古，斷自何代前？
明窗敞流離，高爐爇香烟；
左陳端溪碩，右列薛濤箋；
我手寫我口，古豈能拘牽！
即今流俗語，我若登簡編；
五千年後人，驚為古斕斑。[40]

The idea that historical time is relative, expressed in lines 7-8 and 17-20, which elevates the present to equal footing with high antiquity, is an attack on the reverential attitude towards the past of the "vulgar Confucians." At the same time, it denies the possibility of a radical break that underlies most conceptions of revolution and modernity: in the logic of this poem, no matter how modern your present is, it is destined to become ancient; "At what

40 *Renjinglu shicao jianzhu* 15.

point could you draw a line?" This foreclosure of historical division is consistent with the opening image of the poem, the story from the *Zhuangzi* in which the Emperors of the North and South Seas (named Shu 儵 and Hu 忽 respectively, or together *shuhu* 儵忽, meaning "hasty") meet in the middle to give the Emperor of the Center, whose name is Hundun (*hundun* 混沌 or 渾沌, meaning "chaos"), the sensory organs that he lacked. Whereas the story of Genesis takes seven days to go from a world "formless and void" to the creation of man, the formless Hundun is given one new orifice each day with which to see, hear, eat, and breathe, until after seven days—in a twist quite unlike Genesis—he dies. The *Zhuangzi*'s story of anti-creation reminds us of the danger of recklessly differentiating things, of imposing forms onto something that was originally complete and whole unto itself. Even the creation myth referenced in the poem which resembles Genesis more closely, that of the goddess Nüwa molding humans out of earth, is invoked for the purpose of recalling that we are all made of the same stuff, so none of us is inherently worthier than another—in a sense to bring the reader back to the undifferentiated clay. Bringing form to chaos, placing distinctions on the undifferentiated, is not purely creative—it is also destructive.

After asserting the relativity of historical time, Huang brings the reader to the immediate present, the scene of writing. We are positioned with the poet by a bright window, in a cloud of incense smoke, facing the tools of literary creation, when Huang makes his most famous pronouncement: "My hand writes what my mouth says," another statement that prefigures May Fourth literary thought. Within the context of the poem, this formula is

a corrective to lines 11-12, "If a word doesn't appear in the Six Classics,/ They don't dare to use it in their poems." "Today's slang" (*jijin liusu yu* 即今流俗語, more accurately "Language that circulates among regular people today") would be just the same as "august classical literature," as long as you set it down on paper and wait five thousand years. Huang suggests that the ancients, for their part, were only writing down what was common and familiar to them—we can make our own poetry new if we just do what the ancients did, provided we understand what the ancients were really doing. The argument is similar to Liang Qichao's borrowing of the phrase "make new the people" from *The Great Learning* 大學; as Xiaobing Tang explains, for Liang, "The task of making new amounted to a return to the essence of tradition as a historical formation."[41]

> The dialectic of the old and the new determines that the new need not be totally antithetical to the old because these two categories, when not taken as absolutes, describe a continuous process of renewing. Even the act of 'preserving' can be creative and contribute to the development of the new, and 'conservatism' may even have a positive impact.[42]

The important question is not new or old, it's foolishness or worthiness (*yuxian* 愚賢). The key to reform, again, is stripping away the dregs in order to refine the essence. Liang explains "making new" in the 1902 *Discourse on the New Citizen* 新民説, "On the one hand, it is to purify what one already has and to renew it; on the other, it is to acquire what one does not have so as to make new. If either one is missing, there will be no success."[43]

41 Tang Xiaobing, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: the Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996): 19.

42 Ibid. 25.

43 Quoted Tang 25.

White-Washed: New Poetry, Meaning, and Transparency

And what happens when revolution targets the wrong aspect of a thing, when what was discarded as inessential turns out to be vital? Such is the criticism leveled against the May Fourth movement from the end of the twentieth century by those who long for, in Jianhua Chen's words, an "organic past,"[44] before China's tradition was forsworn and Western cultural forms were welcomed in. Zheng Min 鄭敏 (b. 1920), one of the Nine Leaves School 九葉派 of Modernist poets active in the 1940s, incited an intense debate over the legacy of New Poetry in light of the May Fourth linguistic reforms, when she published an article in 1993 entitled "A Retrospective from the End of the Century: Chinese Language Reform and Chinese New Poetry Composition" 世紀末的回顧：漢語語言變革與中國新詩創作.[45] According to Zheng, May Fourth linguistic and literary reformers such as Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942) had set New Poetry up for failure by insisting on its disconnection from any Chinese poetry that had come before it.

> First, as we consider the achievements of New Poetry, can we include the glorious accomplishments of the several thousand years of Chinese poetry that came prior to the twentieth century? I would answer no, because the vernacular literature movement and subsequent New Literature movement from the beginning of the century determined to detach themselves from classical literature. From language to content they negated continuity and endeavored to make writers turn their backs on classical poetry.

44 Jianhua Chen, "Canon Formation and Linguistic Turn: Literary Debates in Republican China, 1919-1949," *Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm*, ed. Kai-wing Chow et al. (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2008): 63.

45 Zheng Min 鄭敏, "Shijimo de huigu: Hanyu yuyan biange yu Zhongguo xinshi chuangzuo" 世紀末的回顧：漢語語言變革與中國新詩創作, *Jiegou—jiegou shijiao: yuyan, wenhua, pinglun* 結構—解構視角：語言・文化・評論 (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 1998): 91-120.

> 首先是今天在考慮新詩創作成績時能不能將 20 世紀以前幾千年漢詩的光輝績業考慮在內？我的回答是不能。這由於我們在世紀初的白話文及後來的新文學運動中立意要自絕於古典文學，從語言到內容是否定繼承，竭力使創作界遺忘和背離古典詩詞.[46]

Zheng's argument continues the conversation from the 1980s lamenting the "cultural rupture" *wenhua duanlie* 文化斷裂 caused by the May Fourth movement and promoting a "search for roots" *xungen* 尋根.[47] Yet, as Henry Zhao observes, Zheng's article was surprising for the way it approached an old problem from a totally different perspective, namely that of postmodern, and especially poststructuralist, thought;[48] Zheng's primary critique of Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu's literary revolution is that it is "logocentric." Zhao was actually one of the harshest critics of Zheng Min's essay, labeling it "mainland neoconservatism" 中國新保守主義 which had ironically proceeded from mis-application and misinterpretation of Western radical thought; and yet, wasn't Zheng's attempt to engage with poststructuralist theory in the re-evaluation of the Chinese written language a kind of "linguistic turn," such as Zhao himself would come to advocate? In fact, Jianhua Chen has called Zheng Min's essay exactly that: a second Chinese "linguistic turn," a reaction against *baihua* some seventy-five years

46 Ibid. 91.

47 See Catherine Vance Yeh, "Root Literature of the 1980s: May Fourth as a Double Burden," *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, ed. Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Oldřich Král (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001): 230-233 et passim.

48 Zhao Yiheng 趙毅衡, "'Houxue' yu Zhongguo xin baoshouzhuyi" 後學與中國新保守主義, *Jiuling niandai de 'houxue' lunzheng* 90 年代的後學論爭, ed. Wang Hui 汪暉 (Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1998): 137.

after the initial linguistic turn brought on by the literary revolution.[49] There is a difference between "linguistic turn" in the Rortian sense and in the sense Chen applies here, meaning simply a moment of great linguistic change, but Zheng's essay still represents a negotiation with poststructuralism and a critical examination of the understanding of language that inspired the development of New Poetry.

For all of its flaws, Zheng Min's essay challenges the binaristic thinking of much twentieth-century Chinese literary thought, particularly its obsession with authenticity, a tendency which promoted the vernacular over the literary, the popular over the elite, the representational over the abstract, etc., leading to the regime of transparency that a true linguistic turn would challenge. Zheng Min examines the rhetoric of the vernacular literature movement critically, especially its assumption that an imitation of the spoken vernacular would be not only the plainest, clearest, most-accessible form of the written language, but that such virtues outweighed any other considerations. The ideology of the *bai* 白 in *baihua* is extremely heavy-handed: the written vernacular should be clear (*mingbai* 明白), clean (潔白), direct (坦白); according to a logic of the essential and the incidental, the *bai* is only the substance with nothing added. Zheng Min, with the benefit of hindsight, suggests that in attempting to strip away the artifice from a language, the vernacular literature movement may have inadvertently stripped away something essential as well:

> They also misjudged the relationship between a language and its users, especially the deterministic relationship between a people and its mother tongue [sic]. This in turn

49 Chen 64.

> implicates the relationship between the development and reform of a language and its own tradition. How should one reform [a language] in accordance with the language's own rules, prevent it from losing, in the process of reshaping itself, the excellence it has built up over its history, from becoming pale and destitute?
>
> 他們也錯誤地判斷語言與使用者的關係，特別是一個民族與他的母語間的無選擇的關係。這涉及到語言發展與改革與其自身的傳統的關係，如何改革才能符合語言本身的規律，使語言不會在改造過程失去其在歷史中下的文化精華，而變得蒼白貧乏.[50]

By Zheng Min invoking the phrase "pale and destitute" 蒼白貧乏, Zheng Min evinces another meaning of *bai*: pale, barren, lifeless, dead—ironic, given that it was the classical written language that Hu Shi labeled 'dead': "Dead words cannot produce living literature" 死文字不能產生活文學.[51]

Zheng suggests that literary revolution not only deprived poetry of something essential, it also led to a psychologically damaging denial of the essential personality of the poets it affected. For poets who grew up before the literary revolution, writing vernacular literature was a form of disingenuous self-expression, while classical poetry remained the vessel for their most personal thoughts.

> Due to this kind of artificial psychological handicap, Hu, Chen, and many other contemporary authors harbored double, split literary personalities. When they needed to express their thoughts and emotions forcefully they used the old forms, and when they filled the shoes of the literary warrior they wrote vernacular poetry, and whenever they wrote vernacular poetry, they strove to be clear and easy to understand at the expense of poetic craft.
>
> 由於這種人為的心理障礙，胡 陳以及不少其他同時代作家養成雙重 分裂的文學人格，他們當需要强烈的表達自己的情感和思想時就用舊體，而當他們履行文學鬥士的責任時就寫白話詩，每當寫白話詩時，力求明白易懂而放棄詩的藝術.[52]

50 Ibid. 100. See below for a discussion of the phrase "a people's mother tongue."

51 *Hu Shi quanji* 1.54.

In addition to Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu, Zheng cites early new poet Liu Dabai 劉大白 (1880-1932) as an example of a vernacular poet who also wrote in the classical idiom, but Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967), Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881-1936), Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978), Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902-1988), Feng Zhi 馮至 (1905-1993), and of course Mao Zedong could serve as more prominent cases of writers who continued to express themselves in classical poetry despite supporting the cause of vernacular literature.[53] On the one hand, Zheng Min describes a situation where an author is perhaps unable to communicate as effectively in one form versus another, a situation not unlike an adult learner of a second language—like Hu Shi and his unbound feet, which never can take on the shape of feet which grew naturally. On the other hand, Zheng suggests that there is a kind of dishonesty at work in this code-switching:

> Why would one author use these two radically different kinds of language to compose poetry? This is a game played by a poet with a distorted mentality. Having determined that the masses can only understand pale, lifeless language devoid of deeper meaning, and therefore taken on the role of 'progressive poet', writing for the masses, he will whip out that kind of crude and sloppy product. But each time he restores his original identity as a poet, he will end up writing artistic poetry that is not *bai*. ... In his consciousness, he is taking the masses seriously, but subconsciously, he actually thinks they don't need to read something artistic, they just need to read something they can understand.
>
> 同一作者為什麼要以這兩種截然不同的語言來寫詩呢？這是一種扭曲的心態對詩人的戲弄。於認定大眾只能理解蒼白無內涵的語言，因此一旦進入為大眾寫詩的“進步詩人”的角色，就拿出那種粗制濫造的貨色，而每當恢復自己作為詩人的本色時，就又寫出不“白”的藝術詩。... 在上意識上是重視大眾，在無意識中卻是認為他們不需要藝術，只需看明白就是了.[54]

52 “Shijimo de huigu: Hanyu yuyan biange yu Zhongguo xinshi chuangzuo” 102.

53 See Yang Haosheng, *A Modernity in Pre-Modern Tune*, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2008 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2008).

54 “Shijimo de huigu: Hanyu yuyan biange yu Zhongguo xinshi chuangzuo” 102-3.

This is indeed a new wrinkle: because the style of composition encouraged by literary revolution is adopted consciously, it is a role, and because this role is contrary to what the poet really believes, "subconsciously," it is a form of dishonesty, and Zheng Min seems to agree with the figures she is critiquing that poetry is the realm of authenticity. "The poet's split personality makes his works dishonest failures" 詩人的雙從詩格，使作品失之於不誠. Zheng sees evidence of calculation on the part of writers: "'popularization' is a most obscure word, because it is a blood relative of 'reduction to the lowest common denominator'" '大眾化' 仍是個最晦澀的詞,因為它和 '大路貨' 有血緣關係.[55] By invoking the word "obscure" (*huise* 晦澀), Zheng has leveled the most serious accusation she can against the polemics of transparency—the regime of transparency itself is guilty of the worst crime it recognizes.

What has happened here? The "living literature" (*huo wenxue* 活文學) has turned out to be "pale and lifeless" (*cangbai pinfa* 蒼白貧乏); the poet's original identity and talent (*bense* 本色) has revealed itself to be a disingenuous role (*jiaose* 角色) played by someone selling a product (*huose* 貨色); honesty (*tanbai* 坦白) is falsehood (*bucheng* 不誠); transparency (*touming* 透明, *mingbai* 明白) is obscurity (*huise* 晦澀). *Bai* is not *bai.* On the one hand, Zheng is certainly engaged in nostalgia for an organic past which did not exist—one where the "real identity" *bense* 本色 of the poet is clearly visible in his work, as in the old

55 Ibid. 103. The Chinese term here translated 'obscure', *huise* 晦澀, is specifically the target of populist literary discourse. The following chapter will treat this and related terms extensively.

saying that "the writing is like the man" *wen ru qi ren* 文如其人. The highly problematic notion of "national mother tongue" (*minzu muyu* 民族母語), as if a language—a written language, no less—belonged to a people by virtue of ethnicity, and the fantasy that any language, or a nation, might be an entirely closed system through all time, are regrettable misinterpretations of Zheng's theoretical sources and contribute to the "neoconservatism" identified by Henry Zhao. The proponents of vernacular literature thought they could scrape off the paint and reveal the *bai* underneath, but Zheng has shown that *bai* is just another color.

Zhao was only one of the scholars to criticize the article; Michelle Yeh responded as well, criticizing Zheng's argument for being politically and historically reductive and culturally essentializing,[56] not to mention "questionable" in its "appropriation of poststructuralism."[57] Zheng, Yeh suggests, is consciously distancing herself from the New Poetry tradition in which she herself had participated due to that tradition's poor reception globally; Zheng's article is, for Yeh, another response, direct or otherwise, to the "World Poetry" debates of the 1990s, in which the achievements of Chinese New Poetry were both called into question and defended from a variety of perspectives.[58] Those debates began as a

56 Michelle Yeh, "Chinese Postmodernism and the Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Poetry," *Cross-Cultural Readings of Chineseness: Narratives, Images, and Interpretations of the 1990s*, ed. Wen-hsin Yeh (Berkeley, California: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2000): 100-127.

57 Ibid. 111.

58 See Stephen Owen, "What is World Poetry?", *New Republic* (19 Nov. 1990): 28-32; Michelle Yeh, "Chayi de youlü: yige huixiang" 差異的憂慮：一個回響, *Jintian* 今天 1 (1991): 94-6; Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993): 1-5; Zhang Longxi, "Out of the Cultural Ghetto: Theory, Politics, and the Study of Chinese

response to the translation of Misty Poetry into English, specifically Bonnie McDougall's volume of translations of Bei Dao's 北島 poetry, *The August Sleepwalker*.[59] Yeh suggests that Zheng's reference to "international sinology" 世界漢學界 refers to the unfavorable reviews *The August Sleepwalker* received, that Zheng is perhaps embarrassed by the reception New Poetry has found overseas, and she defers to the authority of "international sinology, [which] values these 'national treasures,' abandoned in the wastebasket, more than Chinese cultural circles do" 世界漢學家比中國文化界更重視這些被拋在字紙簍中的 '國之瑰寶' .[60]

Haun Saussy, in his own response to Zheng Min, printed both in the same volume as Yeh's article and in his own *Great Walls of Discourse*,[61] begins his discussion with the quip, "It takes a *xenos* like me to imagine that a Chinese intellectual movement is all about xenophobia or xenophilia."[62] I do not find this to be true in every case. Debates in China may invoke the

---

Literature," *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998): 117-50; Andrew Jones, "Cultural Literature in the 'World' Literary Economy," *Modern Chinese Literature* 9 (1994): 171-90; Gregory B. Lee, *Troubadours, Trumpeters, Troubled Makers: Lyricism, Nationalism and Hybridity in China and Its Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996): 93-127; Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 164-182; Stephen Owen, "Stepping Forward and Back: Issues and Possibilities for 'World' Poetry," *Modern Philology* 100.4 (May 2003): 532-548.; and Lucas Klein, *Foreign Echoes & Discerning the Soil: Dual Translation, Historiography, & World Literature in Chinese Poetry,* Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2010 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2010): 1-30.

59 New York: New Directions Books, 1990.

60 "Shijimo de huigu" 99.

61 Haun Saussy, "Postmodernism in China: a Sketch and Some Queries," *Cross-Cultural Readings of Chineseness: Narratives, Images, and Interpretations of the 1990s*, ed. Wen-hsin Yeh (Berkeley, California: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2000): 128-158, and *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001): 118-145.

62 *Great Walls of Discourse* 123.

West as an "other" at unexpected times, for unexpected reasons, and the West so invoked is always an imaginary, discursive construct. When Zheng Min shames "Chinese cultural circles" for failing to value their "national treasures" as much as sinologists do, the feeling is similar to when a Southern Chinese person sheepishly compliments me on my Mandarin. The point is not that my Mandarin is actually better or worse; the point is that this individual feels insecure about his or her Mandarin. Zheng Min's senses of pride and shame are certainly formed with respect to the West as a cultural other, but that other is imaginary. Even without individual international sinologists to feel shamed by, Zheng Min could still have reasonably regretted the lack of respect for tradition that she observed in her lifetime. (The sinologist she goes on to mention, it deserves to be said, is not Stephen Owen but Ernest Fenollosa.) Zheng's essay takes on a very different cast when it is removed, temporarily, from the World Literature context. Saussy argues, in the intellectual context in which it participates,

> the essay performs precisely the work of classical deconstruction on the territory of modern literature as studied in China. It describes a logic of airtight oppositions, for example, the polarization of past and present in modern literary history, and tries to discover ways of subverting the distinctions, as in the claim that language is always and necessarily an 'inheritance' from the past.[63]

Even if we grant that culture-as-inheritance subverts the hard line between past and present, Zhao's characterization as "conservative" seems appropriate. At the same time, the contradictions that arise as Zheng sets *wenyan* against *baihua* and tradition against modernity, even for the apparent purpose of deconstructing those oppositions,

63 *Great Walls of Discourse* 126.

Michelle Yeh, responding to Zheng Min, persuasively deconstructs this distinction: "Neither in theory nor in practice does modern Chinese poetry define the vernacular exclusively as the spoken language in an attempt, as Zheng claims, to 'replace both the spoken and written language' with the spoken."[64] The very evidence that Zheng cites to refute Hu Shi undermines the distinction that her argument depends on: "if indeed there are 'numerous "traces" of classical literature ... in the so-called vernacular poetry and prose,'" asks Yeh, "can one still claim that the vernacular has 'toppled,' 'smashed,' and 'erased' the classical tradition?"[65] In other words, why attack Hu Shi for cutting ties with tradition on the one hand while simultaneously faulting him for failing to erase all traces of classical Chinese on the other? To use another distinction from the field of linguistics, there is a certain confusion in Zheng Min's article between description and prescription, for instance when she quotes Saussure to say that "What predominates in all change is the persistence of the old substance; disregard for the past is only relative" 在變中舊的本質的不變是主要的，對過去的否定只是相對的.[66] Zheng applies Saussure's statement on the relative immutability of linguistic signs to the vernacular literature movement on the one hand to criticize what the reformers were trying to do ("You can't do that") and on the other hand to criticize what they *did* do ("You shouldn't do that"). Zheng Min's article is another movement in a now 125-year effort

64 "Chinese Postmodernism" 110.

65 Ibid. 112.

66 Quoted ibid. 112. The translation is from Wade Baskin, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1959): 74.

to cope with Chinese poetic modernity by defining its essential properties. By wishing away the May Fourth movement, she is attacking the May Fourth desire to wish away Chinese tradition, and on very much the same grounds.

Over the last twenty-five years, the ongoing debates over modern Chinese poetry's place vis-à-vis World Poetry and classical poetry have helped to place the field temporally and spatially, by problematizing the relationship of Chinese vernacular New Poetry with its others. Both debates were inspired by the same insecurity about the success of New Poetry, and both have worked to articulate a modern Chinese poetic practice, however defined, against external others. However, as Zhang Longxi argues in his response to the World Poetry debate, "The difference *within* Chinese culture is largely ignored so that the relevant difference *between* the Chinese and the Western can be highlighted."[67] The point could be extended with respect to tradition and modernity: differences between the New Poetry and classical Chinese poetry are highlighted, but New Poetry has never been one tradition; from the beginning, there has been a wide variety of styles and schools, each making different claims about the place of poetry and the relationship of its form and content. My goal in turning to form as a keyword in the discussion of modern Chinese poetry is to take a step towards the radical differences within the field of poetry that proceeded from the May Fourth literary revolution, a revolution that upheld a certain understanding of language and meaning. I have characterized this view of language as an insistence on "transparency." If it is possible to forge a "linguistic turn" in Chinese literary studies, whether or not it is an

67 *Mighty Opposites* 135.

imported Western supplement, then it would serve as a counterbalance to the regime of transparency. To return to Henry Zhao, "paying attention to form means destroying the work's mystery and encouraging critical reading: a text which is viewed as an assemblage of words and signs cannot enjoy the glory of wholeness, nor can it possess the truthfulness that comes from 'reflecting reality.'"

Yet difference is not solely a linguistic phenomenon; just as we have argued with respect to the late Qing poetic revolution and the May Fourth vernacular revolution, form and history are mutually-encompassing phenomena. Forms are never innocent, and a historically-informed formalism must consider the politics and polemics of the linguistic structures that motivate poetry. Craig Dworkin invokes 'pataphysics—the study of exceptions as opposed to generalizations—to return questions of form to the material reality of everyday existence:

> A sufficiently radical formalism pursues the closest of close reading in the service of political questions, rather than to their exclusion. At the same time, it refuses to consider the poem as a realm separate from politics, even as it focuses on 'the poem itself.' It is a matter, quite simply, of being true to form. As a 'pataphysical investigation of minute particulars, radical formalisms hew to the concrete. Where 'concrete' is what street is made of.[68]

The structures of consciousness reproduced or subverted through formal manipulations are as serious and real as the pavement and every bit as involved in the reality of politics.

Strait Talk: Center and Margins

The poets and critics discussed in the following chapters are all from Mainland China

68 Craig Dworkin, *Reading the Illegible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003): 5.

and Taiwan, arguably two "centers" of what we might call "Chineseness"; they all write in some version of the standard written vernacular, for the most part free of obvious regional idiosyncrasies or traces of "minor literature." Many of them held or continue to hold institutional positions, at universities or major publications, sometimes even in (one or another) government. Most of them are well-known, and their works are often collected in anthologies. Yet for all their mainstream credentials, I intend to assert their works as examples of radical difference within the tradition of Chinese New Literature, due to their approaches to poetic form and resistance to regimes of transparency. Is the return to 'form' really a cover for a return to national literature? Am I covertly reasserting a dominant discourse as against marginal, minor traditions—against the contemporary classical poets, for instance, or against poets from overseas Chinese communities in Malaysia?

Relying on a binaristic logic of center and margins necessarily involves a destructive reduction of the center, which is never so uniform as it first seems. A center can easily be split into its own, internal center and margins, while the purported margins themselves may contain local centers; although it is necessary and productive to call attention to China's periphery via the discourse of the sinophone, it is simultaneously crucial to remember that "China" itself is not so simple a question, and that the center contains a multitude of Chinas within it. To help illustrate this problem, I wish to put forward a poem by Taiwanese poet Chen Li 陳黎 (b. 1954), an important figure in Taiwanese literature for his unusual ability to combine nativist (*bentu* 本土) and Modernist, postmodernist, or avant-garde poetic

sensibilities—in other words, to be simultaneously local and international, a serious challenge to the presuppositions of the World Poetry debate.[69] Chen's poetry frequently takes the form of homages to writers, artists, and musicians who have inspired him; he defines his own canon. He explains in the preface to his 1995 collection *Island's Edge* 島嶼邊緣: "I do my own thing, teaching, writing, looking at the things I like in the world: [Olivier] Messiaen, [Luigi] Nono, [Kobayashi] Issa, Higashiyama Kaii, Borges, Barthes, Shi Tao, Rilke, ..." 我做我自己的事，教書，寫作，閱讀我喜歡的世界上的東西：梅湘，諾諾，一茶，東山魁夷，波赫士，巴爾蒂斯，石濤，里爾克.....[70] Chen feels free to "do his own thing," perhaps, because he imagines that he lives at what he considers to be the margins (in Hualien 花蓮, a small city with a large aboriginal population on Taiwan's east coast), and yet, he is strongly conscious of the connections between that margin and the rest of the world. As she responds to this essay of Chen's, Michelle Yeh recalls a comment of David Wang's: "It's getting crowded on the margins lately!" 最近邊緣特別擁擠.[71] Indeed, nearly everywhere is on the margin of *something*; centers are extremely fragile fictions. Perhaps this is what Chen Li means when he says, "I live on an island's edge, but I think that an island's edge could also be the center of the world" 我居住在島嶼邊緣，但我覺得島嶼邊緣也可以是世界的中

69 See Michelle Yeh, "Bentu shixue de jianli—du Chen Li *Daoyu bianyuan*" 本土詩學的建立－－讀陳黎島嶼邊緣, Chen Li wenxue canku 陳黎文學倉庫, web, 22 July 2013 <http://dcc.ndhu.edu.tw/chenli/michelle2.htm>.

70 Chen Li, *Daoyu bianyuan* 島嶼邊緣 (Taipei: Huangguan, 1995): 203.

71 "Bentu shixue."

心[72]: recognizing ourselves to be always on the outside of some configuration, we feel free to belong to something larger.

In a poem from *Island's Edge* dated 1995, Chen Li consciously revises the linguistic assumptions of the May Fourth Era in light of the identity politics of the late 20th century. The poem is called "Exercises for Not Curling the Tongue" 不捲舌運動; the phrase "tongue-curling" *juanshe* 捲舌 refers to the production of the retroflex series of consonants which appears in Standard Mandarin and some Northern Chinese dialects, but not in most Southern Chinese dialects.[73] In particular, the majority of Taiwanese Mandarin speakers do not incorporate these sounds into their speech, so the presence or absence of this series of consonants serves as a crude and easy way to distinguish mainlanders from Taiwanese. The poem begins by associating the "tongue-curling" retroflex consonants with formality, inauthenticity, and needless complication.

> Don't curl the tongue
> Don't wear bowties
> Don't speak a certain way to put on airs
> Don't make things too complicated to show off
>
> An easy, self-assured movement
> Allows the tongue to become a simple creature
> Not a dawdling loitering serpent
>
> Those unaccustomed ornaments *zh ch sh r*
> Zhe huar, na huar[74]

72 *Daoyu bianyuan* 202-3.

73 These consonants are written *zh*, *ch*, *sh*, and *r* in *pinyin* and ㄓ, ㄔ, ㄕ, and ㄖ in *zhuyin fuhao*.

74 Literally, "This word, that word," but with the rhotacized nominalizing suffix *-r* 兒, another common feature of Northern Chinese speech, added.

We don't need that

不捲舌
不打領結
不裝腔作勢
不繁文縟節

輕便自在的行動
讓舌成為簡單的獸
躑躅踟躕的蛇不要

戴不慣的首飾ㄓㄔㄕㄖ
這話兒那話兒
可以不要[75]

What follows is a re-writing of a famous tongue-twister composed by Yuen Ren Chao (a.k.a. Zhao Yuanren 趙元任, 1892-1982), "The History of Mr. Shi Eating Lions" 施氏食獅史, which tells a story through the use of only characters pronounced *shi*.[76] The story is meant to illustrate historical changes in the Chinese language(s), as the disappearance of phonemic distinctions causes *wenyan*, written mainly with monosyllables, to become overly ambiguous when read aloud. In "The Problem of the Chinese Language," Chao and Hu Shi argue for the "reform of the literary idiom":

> Differences between the spoken and the written languages do, and ought to exist in all languages, but the two must not be separated by a chasm. A poem must be recitable, an oration must be deliverable, not to oneself, but to others. I wager that if a poem is read aloud to a hundred educated persons *of the same dialect as the reader*, unless it is on a hackneyed theme with hackneyed phrases, it will not be understood by more ears than one can count on his fingers.[77]

75 *Daoyu bianyuan* 115-6.

76 Zhao Yuanren, *Yuyan wenti* 語言問題 [*The Problem of Language*] (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue wenxueyuan, 1959): 143. A variation of the story appears in the much earlier (but similarly titled) "The Problem of the Chinese Language," co-authored in English with Suh Hu (Hu Shi), in *The Chinese Students' Monthly* 11 (1916) 579 and 593n. The earlier version is attributed to M.T. Hu (Hu Mingda 胡明達), Chao's friend and roommate. *The Problem of Language* also includes stories written only with the syllable *yi* and the syllable *ji*.

77 "The Problem of the Chinese Language" 579.

Chen's revised version uses Southern-accented Mandarin, where *shi* ㄕ is merged with *si* ㄙ, making even more homophones available.

> Try and read it:
> Mr. Shih liked poetry, he liked eating dead corpses, he had his ten attendants
> go to the market, to slowly collect fourteen dead lions
> four of the dead lines really looked like stone lions, ten of the dead lions were wet
> as wet persimmons, Mr. Shih tore into a lion and ate noisily
> It was a lion, it was a corpse, it was an epic poem...
>
> 唸唸看：
> 石氏嗜詩，嗜食死屍，使十侍
> 適市，施施拾十四死獅
> 四獅屍實似石獅，十獅屍濕
> 似濕柿，石氏撕獅嘶嘶食
> 是獅，是屍，是史詩……

Chen then follows his tongue-twister with the intended pronunciation, written in Mandarin Phonetic Symbols (*zhuyin fuhao* 注音符號), to clarify to the reader that all the forty-eight characters of the passage should be pronounced the same way (*si*), with no retroflex consonants:

> （ㄙˊㄙˋㄙˋㄙㄙˋㄙˊㄙˇㄙㄙˇㄙˊㄙˋ
> ㄙˋㄙˋㄙㄙㄙˊㄙˊㄙˋㄙˇㄙ
> ㄙˋㄙㄙㄙˊㄙˋㄙˊㄙㄙˊㄙㄙㄙ
> ㄙˋㄙㄙˋㄙˊㄙˋㄙㄙㄙㄙˊ
> ㄙˋㄙㄙˋㄙㄙˋㄙˇㄙ……）

Where the need for a written supplement to make sense of a recited passage was, for Chao and Hu, an unacceptable situation, for Chen it is an opportunity to play—a confusing lack of distinctions maddening from the perspective of language as a tool of communication is a poet's boon.

Chen concludes his poem with an even more pointed message of Taiwanese nativism:

There are two kinds of lion corpses, fine
But for tongue-twisters, just like for epic poems,
There's only one kind

Not constipated
Not bloated
Not contradicting history
Not condemning no tongue-curling

For instance, say *permanently reside in Taiwan* (ts'ang-tsu Taiwan)
For instance, say *The Three Principles of the People unify China* (Tsung-kuo)[78]

獅屍有兩種，好的
繞口令，一如好的史詩
只有一種

不便秘
不臃腫
不違背歷史
不排斥不捲舌

譬如說長（ㄔㄤˊ）住（ㄗㄨˋ）台灣
譬如說三民主（ㄗㄨˇ）義統一中（ㄓㄨㄥ）國

Chen's poem highlights the intersections of political boundaries and linguistic boundaries. To "permanently reside in Taiwan" means forgetting one's mainland origins and adopting a Taiwanese identity that does not refer back to a "China" that is elsewhere—the margin cut loose from the center, if only symbolically and only to a certain extent. Chen's utopian pronouncement that the margins can also be the center of the world depends on such an act of subtle subversion: he does not compose his poem in Taiwanese Minnan 閩南 dialect, the language spoken natively by the majority of Taiwanese, nor in any of Taiwan's many aboriginal tongues, but merely substitutes one set of phonemes for another to create a

78 Again, Chen Li uses phonetic symbols to indicate that his desired pronunciation should not include retroflex consonants; I have Romanized his prescribed pronunciations using the Wade-Giles system which is common in Taiwan.

distinctly local version of the national language.

In the end, does it matter if someone pronounces China *Zhongguo* or *Tsung-kuo*? Does it matter if a writer follows a group of two syllables with a group or three, or a group of three with a group of two? Phonemes, like numbers, do not have intrinsic political valences. The number two is not modern, any more than the number three is traditional; the retroflex fricative /ʂ/ is not inherently totalitarian, any more than the dental sibilant /s/ is inherently liberal democratic. Nevertheless, the cultural practices that lead to group identity depend on such arbitrary differences, and the distinctness of Taiwanese identity versus mainland often comes down to dental sibilants instead of retroflex, Wade-Giles or Mandarin Phonetic Symbols instead of *Hanyu pinyin*, traditional characters instead of simplified—with similar reactions against standard mainland linguistic forms occurring in Hong Kong. Recent developments in China's relations with Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau, particularly under chief executives in Taiwan and Hong Kong who are perceived as friendlier to the People's Republic (Ma Ying-jeou 馬英九 and C.Y. Leung 梁振英, respectively), have only increased the emphasis on local forms in response to nationally-imposed standards. Chen Li's formalism finds the difference within the standard, the margin within the center.

The chapters of this dissertation, beginning with this introduction, represent five moments in the dialectic of form and content as it has played out in the history of modern

Chinese poetry. Each chapter carries, in addition to its title, a single-word as a heading to describe the various aspects of this dialectic. Chapter two, with the heading "obscurity," examines the place in the modern Chinese poetic tradition of *menglong* 朦朧—obscurity, difficulty, ambiguity, suggestion—terms that indicate the absence or evasiveness of meaning. Symbolist-inspired poet Li Jinfa 李金髮 (1900-1976) will act as the central figure, as discussion of his works has always accompanied debates over obscurity, from the debate over literary Modernism in China in the 1930s to the similar debate in Taiwan beginning in 1950s, and finally back to the Mainland with Misty or Obscure poetry in the 1980s. The charge of obscurity is examined as a polemical device, as a descriptive term for certain kinds of figurative language, and as a demand for alternative modes of reading and interpretation.

Chapter three is example of the kind of alternative modes of reading available when the usual modes of linguistic signification are placed aside. Under the heading "musicality," we explore the place of rhythm in the aesthetic theories of Zhu Guangqian 朱光潛 (1896-1986), including his arguments which make rhythm the basis for empathy. In his analysis of poetry in the 1942 work *Shi lun* 詩論, Zhu turns toward a kind of reading we wish to call "musical"—where all-or-nothing categories are rejected, and a work is to be treated as an organic whole with an infinite number of pertinent relations. This direction leads Zhu to posit an identity of form and content, where meaning is neither prior nor anterior to the words that express it. In emphasizing the essential similarities among different poetic practices, Zhu's view of literary history forecloses the possibility or desirability of radical

change at the same time as it opens the door for gradual change and a Chinese modernity based on salutary cultural contact and renovation.

Chapter four, setting out from the tired but perennially thorny problem of "translatability," presses more firmly on the issues surrounding cultural contact between poetic traditions, in particular the possibility or desirability of viewing poetic form as an essential feature of poetry which must be reproduced in a faithful translation. The idea that poetry cannot be translated, that its content is too intimately wedded to its form to permit adequate faithfulness, denigrates the validity of the long and vibrant tradition of translated poetry in Chinese, as well as foreclosing the possibility of alternative, experimental forms of translation.

Chapter five, headed by "iconicity," describes just such an experimental translation, by Taiwanese poet Hsia Yü (Xia Yu 夏宇, b. 1956), whose poetry continually treats language less as words and more as images. Hsia Yü's avant-garde poetic techniques, especially her use of mirror-image forms, cut-ups, and collages, destabilize conventional modes of reading. Her recent book of experimental poetry translations deploys these techniques against the ubiquitous digitalization of media—an avant-garde practice which is nostalgic for the past. With Hsia Yü, we approach an understanding of language so hostile to signification that it suggests truly terrifying possibilities. Hsia Yü's rejection of linguistic transparency and nostalgic avant-gardism point to the close of the era when written text had a physical, material existence, and so she represents a fitting close to the dissertation.

These assorted case studies cannot address the totality of the Chinese New Poetry tradition, but they do suggest an approach to that tradition which may open up new avenues for discussion. They represent an effort to bring out the latent "linguistic turn" in a historically-grounded way. In a sense, they comprise a history of form, but a history whose form itself is not closed; they are a collection of particulars assembled to suggest a myriad of potential interconnections, rather than a single, monolithic narrative.

Chapter 2
Obscurity

Menglong: A Modern History

A 1980 article by Zhang Ming 章明, entitled "Infuriating Obscurity" 令人氣悶的朦朧, firmly fixed the place of the term *menglong* 朦朧, "obscurity," in the ongoing discussion about modern and Modernist Chinese poetry.[1] In that article, Zhang objects to the obscure, difficult poetry he sees in contemporary journals and proposes the existence of what he calls a *menglong ti* 朦朧體, that is, *Menglong*-ist poetry. This characterization would stick, and it became the proper designation of the generation of poets who grew up during the Cultural Revolution and began publishing in underground journals (notably *Today*, *Jintian* 今天) in the late 1970s and early 1980s; this group is commonly known as the *Menglong shipai* 朦朧詩派, or in English the Misty or Obscure poets. At the time Zhang Ming (whose name literally means "obvious and bright," the opposite of obscure) chose the word, it was not yet a proper name, but merely an apt characterization drawn from a large inventory of words to describe difficult writing.[2] Surprisingly, the first poet to whom Zhang

1 Zhang Ming 章明, "Lingren qimen de menglong," *Menglong shi lunzheng ji*, ed. Yao Jiahua 姚家華 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1989) 28-34.

2 We will discuss a selection of this vocabulary and its implications below.

applied the description *menglong* was actually born two generations before the Menglong Poets: Du Yunxie 杜運燮 (1918-2002), who was most active in the 1940s and who would be canonized as part of the Nine Leaves Group 九葉派 in 1981. The *Menglong*-ist poem singled out by Zhang for the most thorough analysis is Du's "Autumn" 秋, first published in 1980 in *Shi kan* 詩刊:

> Even the pigeon-whistles send out mature tunes:
> It's past, the summer that the rain rioted.
> You'll never again recall that strict, stifling trial,
> That trivial reminiscence during dangerous swimming.
>
> Having experienced the spring sprouts' ground-breaking,
> The twists and hurts of young leaves' growing-up,
> These branches have gone mad beneath blazing sun,
> Nearly lost direction in the rainy night.
>
> Now, the easy sky has no floating clouds,
> Mountain streams are clear, and the view is exceptionally broad;
> In the season when wisdom and affection matured,
> The riverwater also seemed to rise from a deeper source.
>
> Tangled air currents ferment,
> In the mountain valleys they brew into transparent spirits;
> How many autumns have they blown here? The drunkard's fragrance
> Has already stained autumn buds autumn leaves.
>
> Street-lining trees imply something in red,
> Bicycle wheels flash morning air;
> A crane's long arm points far off into the sky,
> Above, the autumn sun glances over news of the harvest.
>
> 連鴿哨也發出成熟的音調，
> 過去了，那陣雨喧鬧的夏季。
> 不再想那嚴峻的悶熱的考驗，
> 危險游泳中的細節回憶。

經歷過春天萌芽的破土，
幼葉成長中的扭曲和受傷，
這些枝條在烈日下也狂熱過，
差點在雨夜中迷失方向。

現在，平易的天空沒有浮雲，
山川明淨，視野格外寬遠；
智慧、感情都成熟的季節呵，
河水也象是來自更深處的源泉。

紊亂的氣流經過發酵，
在山谷裡釀成透明的好酒；
吹來的是第幾陣秋意？醉人的香味
已把秋花秋葉深深染透。

街樹也用紅顏色暗示點什麼，
自行車的車輪閃射著朝氣；
吊車的長臂在高空指向遠方，
秋陽在上面掃描豐收的信息。[3]

On one level, the poem's meaning proceeds from its title: autumn and all of the associations that follow from the passage of time—old age, maturity, rest—control most of the imagery. The poem also gestures towards a more specific allegorical meaning; in particular, "the street-lining trees imply something in red," plays with the clearly-defined symbolism of the Cultural Revolution era, as does the "blazing sun," symbolizing Mao Zedong, which drives the branches "mad." The ten years of chaos and violence have "twisted and hurt" the young, vulnerable leaves; the passing of summer and its storms implies not only aging in a general sense, but the loss of innocence.

3 Zhang Ming 29.

Zhang's response to the poem takes this historical context and its symbolism as a starting point:

> This poem, when you first read it once or twice, is very hard to figure out. I was worried that this was due to my own ineptness, so I asked a comrade who often writes poetry to instruct me. He read it and also shook his head, saying he didn't understand. The two of us studied it together for an hour or so before it seemed like we could guess that what the author had in mind (we don't know if we guessed right) is to compare the Cultural Revolution's ten years of chaos to "the summer that spell of rain rioted," and [to say that] now, everything is as still and cool as autumn. If we guessed right, then the inspiration and outline of this poem are very good, but in terms of its method of expression, why does it have to be so arcane and difficult? The first line, "Even the pigeon-whistles send out mature tunes," is difficult to grasp. A young rooster just beginning to crow might send out immature tunes, so an adult rooster's call would be mature. But as a pigeon-whistle is an instrument to make noise, it's hard to see how its tune could be mature or immature. To use "easy" to describe the sky is very unusual. "Tangled air currents ferment"—I don't know if saying that air currents ferment means that the air currents swell, but then what would it mean to say that swollen air currents brew into "transparent spirits"? "Above, the autumn sun glances over news of the harvest"—news isn't a material thing, so how can it be glanced over? ... "Having experienced the spring sprouts' ground-breaking, / The twists and hurts of young leaves' growing-up"—lines like these are awkward to read, they don't seem like Chinese. It seems like the author first wrote them out in a foreign language and then translated them into Chinese.
>
> 這首詩初看一兩遍是很難理解的。我擔心問題出在自己的低能，於是向一位經常寫詩的同志請教，他讀了也搖頭說不懂。我們兩個經過一個來小時的共同研究，這才仿佛地猜到作者的用意（而且不知猜得對不對）是把文化革命的十年動亂比作“陣雨喧鬧的夏季”，而現在，一切都象秋天一樣的明淨爽朗了。如果我們猜得不錯，這首詩的立意和構思都是很好的；但是在表現手法上又何必寫得這樣深奧難懂呢？“連鴿哨也發出成熟的音調”，開頭一句就叫人捉摸不透。初打鳴的小公雞可能發出不成熟的音調，大公雞的聲調就成熟了。可鴿哨是一種發聲的器具，它的音調很難有什麼成熟與不成熟之分。天空用“平易”來形容，是很希奇的。“紊亂的氣流經過發酵”，說氣流發酵，不知道是不是用以比喻氣流膨脹，但膨脹的氣流釀出“透明的好酒”又是什麼意思呢？“秋陽在上面掃描豐收的信息”，信息不是一種物質實體，它能被掃描出來呀?再說，既然是用酷暑來比喻十年動亂，那為什麼第二節又扯到春天，使讀者產生思想紊亂呢?經歷春天萌芽的破土，幼葉成長中的扭曲和受傷”，這樣的句子讀來也覺得彆扭，不象是中國話，仿佛作者是先用外文寫出來，然後再把它譯成漢語似的.[4]

4 Zhang Ming 30.

Zhang makes several accusations towards Du's poem: it is "hard to figure out" 很難理解的, one "doesn't understand" it 不懂, it's "arcane and difficult" 深奧難懂, and "difficult to grasp" 叫人捉摸不透. Zhang's final complaint, that the poem seems translated, rings perhaps most loudly. Again and again over the history of modern Chinese poetry, critics have made similar comments, not merely observing the (often quite salient) influence of Western poetry on Chinese poets, but going so far as to say that modern Chinese poetry seems to have been written in a foreign language and then translated into Chinese.[5] On the one hand, some of Du's sentences do exhibit what is often called "Europeanized syntax" *Ouhua yufa* 歐化語法—for instance, characterized by particularly long modifying clauses—but Zhang seems to be suggesting something else: namely, Du's language is unfamiliar, so perhaps it is because of foreign influence.

Let us attend to the grammatical constructions that Zhang and his collaborator pick out as awkward. "Having experienced the spring sprouts' ground-breaking,/ The twists and hurts of young leaves' growing-up": these two lines comprise one long verb phrase (which I have translated as a participle modifying "these branches"), with the verb "experienced" *jingli guo* 經歷過 taking three nominalized verbs for objects, namely *potu* 破土 (literally 'break ground'), *niuqu* 扭曲 ('bend and twist'), and *shoushang* 受傷 ('be injured'). ("Growing-up"

5 Another famous example, from the other shore of the Taiwan Strait, predates Zhang Ming by almost a decade: Guan Jieming 關傑明, "Zhongguo xiandai shiren de kunjing" 中國現代詩人的困境, *Zhonghua xiandai wenxue daxi: Taiwan 1970-1989* 中華現代文學大系：台灣 1970－1989, ed. Yu Guangzhong 余光中 (Taipei: Jiuge chubanshe, 1989), 2.882-885. We will return to the debates over Modernism in Taiwan below, and to the question of modern Chinese poetry as "already translated" in chapter four.

chengzhang 成長, part of a modifying phrase, is yet another nominalized verb.) The difficulty of the line owes in no small measure to the differing agents of these verbs—where "break ground" and "grow up" have the plant as implied agent, "bend and twist" and "be injured" imply a passive construction whose agent is unspoken and unknown. It is very probable that Zhang would have considered the lines less awkward if the verb "experienced" were removed entirely, and the three nominalized verbs allowed to stand on their own: "The spring sprouts break ground,/ The young leaves are twisted and hurt as they grow up." The result is undeniably more "Chinese," in the sense that it recalls the structure of classical Chinese poetry, but what else has changed? For one thing, parallelism has been introduced, grammatically if not prosodically, and the reader is forced to consider these two statements in relation to each other, either for their similarity or their contrast. For instance, we could see the hopefulness of birth contrasted with the pain of growing up. Du's version is more complicated, and its significance is derived from the use of the verb "experienced" in such a way that ground-breaking, twisting, and being-hurt can all serve as the objects of experience. The failed parallelism of experience's objects creates the awkwardness of the lines, which suggests the tortured path of the branches' lives, an expression of the ambivalence of Du's autumn, the ambivalence of experience, along with the "mature" pigeon whistles and fermented air currents. But then again, Zhang says he does not understand either of those metaphorical images either.

It is Du's figurative language that creates the most trouble for Zhang. An actual

rooster's calls could be mature or immature synecdochically, he admits, but Zhang steadfastly refuses to apply the term to the sound produced by an inanimate object. Similarly, someone's personality can be *pingyi* 平易, "easy going," but the sky cannot. The air cannot ferment or turn into alcohol. To these objections, Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 would respond in defense of the allegedly *menglong* poets by saying, "If this can serve as the basis for judgment, then Chairman Mao's famous line, 'She [the plum] smiles in the grove,' is incomparably absurd" 如果這個論據足以成立，那麼毛主席的名句 '她〔梅〕在叢中笑' 就荒謬絕倫.[6] Zhang's complaints do seem rather naive; surely he is not incapable of understanding figurative language? One way to approach Zhang's mis-reading (or failure to read) the poem comes from William Empson, whose first type of ambiguity is "the comparison of two things which does not say in virtue of what they are to be compared."[7] (The Chinese translation of *Seven Types of Ambiguity* uses *menglong* to translate "ambiguity," suggesting that what Empson and Zhang Ming are talking about may not be so distant.) That is, ambiguity is produced in cases where the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor could be related in various ways. Paul de Man, reading Empson, proposes that,

> instead of setting up an adequation between two experiences, and thereby fixing the mind on the repose of an established equation, [metaphor] deploys the initial experience into an infinity of associated experiences that spring from it. In the manner of a vibration spreading in infinitude from its center, metaphor is endowed with the capacity to situate the experience at the heart of a universe that it generates. It provides the ground rather than the frame, a

6 Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, "Jinri xinshi mianlin de yishu wenti" 今日新詩面臨的藝術問題, *Menglong shi lunzheng ji* 朦朧詩論爭集, ed. Yao Jiahua 姚家華 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1989): 135.

7 William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977): 21.

limitless anteriority that permits the limiting of a specific entity.[8]

In other words, ambiguity might not be a special case of metaphor; lack of definite meaning might be a constitutive property of poetic language. "Far from referring back to an object that would be its cause, the poetic sign sets in motion an imaging activity that refers to no object in particular. The 'meaning' of the metaphor is that it does not 'mean' in any definite manner."[9] If we take Zhang at his word, he sincerely does not understand the implications of "tangled air currents ferment"—and who is to say that we do? In fact, Zhang Ming is not alone; more often than not, a critic objecting to obscurity or difficulty will ask question almost exactly like Zhang's, "How can a pigeon whistle be mature?" How can one speak of branches "experiencing" a plant's "ground-breaking" and "being twisted and hurt" in the same breath? Zhang's rhetorical maneuvers are easily explained, but the questions his attack raises are far more difficult to answer.

Obscurity is not a new problem in Chinese poetry, but it is a central problem of the last hundred years, not to mention a constant barrier to the acceptance of New Poetry by readers. Though many of the critics we will mention consider obscurity a failure of the poet or of the particular poem to communicate to the reader, we consider the reader him or herself as integral to the production of meaning and therefore the only available—though not authoritative—judge of a text's clarity or obscurity. Thus our study relies heavily on such data

8 Paul de Man, "The Dead End of Formalist Criticism," *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed., revised (London: Methuen, 1983): 235.

9 Ibid.

pertaining to reader comprehension as we have: merely a collection of essays like Zhang Ming's—which may or may not form a coherent discourse, which may or may not represent attempts to analyze their objects in any detail, and whose authors may or may not be arguing in good faith—and a few, generally more lucid defenses and apologies by critics sympathetic to Modernism in literature. Nevertheless, for us to insist that these readers really *do* or *could* understand would be just as disingenuous as it is for them to insist that no one could understand; therefore, just as we did with Zhang Ming, we will do our best to take our critics at their word. Our discussion will proceed by first recounting and analyzing the critical reception of Li Jinfa 李金髮 (a.k.a. Ginffa Lee, 1900-1976), whose name became a byword for obscurity throughout the twentieth century, from the 1920s through the 1980s and on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. In addition to examining the aspects of Li's Symbolist-inspired poetic craft that may relate to his purported *menglong*-ness, we will consider the polemical strategy of labeling a poet or other writer *menglong*. The second half of the chapter will turn to defenses of poetic obscurity, especially the writings of Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 (1898-1948), along with approaches to creating meaning out of difficult poems by poets such as Bian Zhilin.

First, some notes on terminology. The critical vocabulary includes a variety of different words and phrases to describe difficult writing. Some are merely negations of understanding, such as *nandong* 難懂, *nanjie* 難解, and *feijie* 費解, all of which mean

"difficult to understand," and *kanbudong* 看不懂, *buming* 不明, or *butong* 不通 which mean "cannot be understood." Other terms are themselves highly metaphorical. More impressionistically, there are *menglong* 朦朧, *huanghu* 恍惚, *mohu* 模糊, and *aimei* 曖昧, all of which mean, roughly, 'indistinct.' In the discussion of literary obscurity in the twentieth century, *huise* 晦澀 and *menglong* are the two most important of these terms; we will translate both as "obscure," though their etymologies suggest slightly different implications. The *Hanyu da cidian* defines *huise* as, "of writing etc., hidden and obscure, not smooth, not easy to understand" 謂文辭等隱晦，不流暢，不易懂.[10] The character *hui* originally refers to the evening darkness, while *se* is the opposite of smooth, appealing to a tactile or gustatory metaphor: in combination *se* can mean 'rough' (as in *cuse* 粗澀), 'stilted of speech' (*se'ne* 澀訥), 'unripe' (*shengse* 生澀), or 'bitter' (*kuse* 苦澀). Written differently, as 晦塞 (this *se* meaning 'stopped up,' overlapping with the other character), the word appears in Liu Xie's 劉勰 chapter of the *Wenxin dialong* 文心雕龍 on "The Hidden and the Evident" 隱秀. Liu defines the quality *yin* 隱, which means hidden, as "a further meaning beyond the words" 文外重旨者; "it is best employed in creating multiple layers of sense" 隱以複意為工.[11] *Huise* is *yin* gone too far: "Some people mistake obscurity for depth. Although it is mysterious [like depth], it is not *yin*" 或有晦塞為深，雖奧非隱.[12] Pei Ziye 裴子野 (469-530) makes a

10 *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大辭典 (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 2001): 5.739.

11 Liu Xie 劉勰, *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龍註 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1960): 2.632.

12 Ibid. 2.633.

similar distinction between *yin* and depth in his *Discussion of Carving Insects* 雕蟲論, criticizing poetry that is "crafted but inessential, hidden but not profound" 巧而不要，隱而不深.[13] *Menglong*, on the other hand, originally means 'dim' or 'indistinct'; in its most common written form, both characters employ the moon radical. It often describes the moonlight, for instance in Pan Yue's 潘岳 (247-300) *Fu on Autumn's Arrival* 秋興賦, "The moon is *menglong*-ily bright" 月朦朧以含光兮, or in Tang Dynasty *ci*-poet Xu Changtu's 徐昌圖 (fl. 10th century) "Linjiang xian" 臨江仙, "Where is the painted boat tonight? / The tide is steady, and the moonlight over the Huai River is *menglong*" 今夜畫船何處？潮平淮月朦朧. It can also be written with the sun radical (曚曨) or the eye radical (曚曨); its earliest uses all pertain to light and vision. Consistent with the metaphorical system that relates the meaning of writing or speaking to something which can be viewed and identified more or less clearly, *menglong*'s extended meanings relate to confusion and difficulty comprehending (cf. *mingliao* 明瞭, *qingchu* 清楚, *mingbai* 明白, *mingque* 明確, *hutu* 糊塗, etc.).

Neither *huise* nor *menglong* has ever had particularly positive associations attached, but we have seen how Liu Xie merely places *huise* at the undesirably far end of a spectrum that also includes the positive quality *yin*. If it is possible to generalize, classical Chinese poetry often places an emphasis on suggestion, *hanxu* 含蓄, rather than explicit expression;

13 Yu Yuan 郁沅 and Zhang Minggao 張明高, eds., *Wei Jin Nanbeichao wenlun xuan* 魏晉南北朝文論選 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1996): 325.

hence "meaning beyond the words" *yanwai zhi yi* 言外之意 is considered a virtue. This is not to say, however, that modern readers regard much classical poetry as "difficult," due to the long history of contextualization and explication that has grown up around the most commonly read poets. When critic Ren Weiqing writes in 1980 against the "*menglong* tendency" in modern Chinese poetry, he insists that the best poets were never *menglong*, and he lists Du Fu, Bai Juyi, and Qu Yuan as examples.[14] Certainly taking Bai Juyi as an example of clarity in poetic expression will meet with little disagreement (and the political implications of choosing a poet who wrote about common folk and their suffering is clear), but when even Qu Yuan seems to readers to be perfectly intelligible, one suspects the critical tradition has simply grown over-confident in its interpretations. Thus modern critics who advocate transparency are never at a loss for classical models; for negative examples, they habitually refer to the small group of poets about whose work the tradition is willing to admit defeat—Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813-858), Wu Wenying 吳文英 (c. 1207-1269), and a few others.

Li Jinfa, Father of the ~~*Menglong*~~ Symbolist School

Our discussion of obscurity, of the *menglong*, in modern Chinese poetry began in 1980, a crucial moment in literary history, when a generation of new poets reacting radically against the limitations placed on artistic expression during the Cultural Revolution were

14 Ren Weiqing 任維清, "Tan shige de 'menglong qingxiang'" 談詩歌的 '朦朧傾向', *Shandong wenxue* 山東文學 1980.12 (Dec. 1980): 72.

reaching a wider audience, at the same time as older poets like Du Yunxie and Bian Zhilin were returning to publishing after decades of silence. However, the discussion surrounding obscurity in New Poetry had begun as early as the 1920s, prompted by a poet whose name would be raised again and again through the decades: Li Jinfa. For poetry critics on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, Li Jinfa has long served as a cautionary example. For instance, as the debate over what we now call Misty or Menglong poetry raged in the Mainland in the early 1980s, Li's poetic oeuvre underwent critical reappraisal. Here is one representative passage, from an article by Du Xuezhong, Mu Huaiying, and Qiu Wenzhi reassessing Li's successes and failures:

> Incomprehensible, trivial enigmas such as this one comprise a large proportion of this period of Li Jinfa's poetry. Without a doubt, this kind of work has lost art's social function and aesthetic significance, and as a result it could never be acknowledged by the masses of its time. Unfortunately, this is an important reason why Li Jinfa's poetry has gone unread, has been all but forgotten by the world, for so long. This is a tragedy which the extremely talented Li could never have predicted, and it is a historical lesson that should be remembered by obscure poets who mistake unfathomability for ability.
>
> 象這樣不知所云的‘笨謎’，在李金髮這一時期的詩歌中占有很大比重。這樣的作品無疑會失去藝術的社會功能和審美意義，因而也不會被時代和群眾所承認。李金髮的詩歌長期湮沒塵封，幾被世人忘卻，恐怕這是一個重要原因。這是頗有才華的李金髮所逆料不到的悲劇，也是現今某些以‘莫測高深’為能事的朦朧詩人所應記取的歷史教訓.[15]

Typically, Li himself is not the real subject of the discussion, but rather those "obscure poets who mistake unfathomability for ability." Interest and debate in Li Jinfa routinely flared up each time difficult, Modernist- or Symbolist-inspired poets or schools gained currency, starting from the popularity of Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 (1905-1950) and the journal *Les*

15 Du Xuezhong 杜學忠 et al., "Lun Li Jinfa de shige chuangzuo" 論李金髮的詩歌創作, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* 中國現代文學研究叢刊 1983.10 (Oct. 1983): 55.

contemporains (*Xiandai* 現代) in the 1930s, continuing through the debate over Modernism in Taiwan beginning in the late 1950s, and once again with the advent of properly *Menglong* poetry after the Cultural Revolution. Any discussion of obscurity in modern Chinese New Poetry must begin with Li Jinfa.

Li appeared on the Chinese literary scene in the mid-1920s, while he was studying sculpture in France and Germany, after he sent his manuscripts unsolicited to Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967). According to Li's recollections, Zhou pronounced that they were "something not to be found domestically" 國內所無 and arranged for them to be published.[16] From 1925 to 1927, Li published three volumes of poetry of 262, 296, and 235 pages, respectively: *Drizzle* 微雨 (Beixin, 1925), *Singing for Happiness* 為幸福而歌 (Shangwu, 1926), and *The Dinner Guest and the Famine Year* 食客與凶年 (Beixin, 1927). He would go on to publish some more collections of prose and poetry; edit China's foremost (though short-lived) fine arts magazine, *Mei yu* 美育; work in arts education alongside Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868-1940); take up diplomatic posts in Iran and Iraq in the 1940s; and eventually retire to the United States, where he operated a poultry farm in Lakewood, New Jersey. He died in Long Island City, New York, in 1976. In his retirement, he would reminisce, "In the thirties, I really did make some waves in China's feeble literary scene. A few people called me the 'eccentric of poetry,' and some people recognized me as the founder of the Chinese Symbolist school" 我在三十年代，確曾在貧弱的中國文壇，翻起一些

16 Li Jinfa, *Yiguo qingdiao* 異國情調 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1946): 34.

波浪，有些人稱我為詩怪，有一部份人公認我為中國象徵派的創始者.[17] The older Li is more than willing to defer to his detractors, either out of modesty or with the benefit of hindsight:

> A certain Ms. Su Xuelin wrote an article analyzing my poetry; she explained the ins and outs of my philosophy more clearly than I could myself. In truth, my poetry was just a word game for a man in his youth. There was no philosophy to speak of. Some of it was just adolescent fantasy, its craft was stupid and clumsy; now I find it embarrassing to read. Certainly it doesn't belong in the august halls of literary history.
>
> 一位蘇雪林女士，還寫了一篇分析我詩的文章，說我的思想的來龍去脈，比我自己還明瞭。實在我的詩，是弱冠之年的一種文字遊戲，談不上什麼思想，有些還是幼稚的幻想，笨拙的技術，如今自己看了還覺得難以為情，那裡能登文學史大雅之堂呢.[18]

Nevertheless, Li does have a particular place in those august halls, not just as one of the first Chinese writers to be influenced by French Symbolism (Liang Zongdai 梁宗岱 was roughly contemporaneous), but also as the first major detour from the original principles of New Literature set out by Hu Shi. Where Hu had advocated transparency, clarity, easy comprehension, and strictly vernacular language, Li wrote strange, suggestive verse in an idiosyncratic mix of spoken idiom and classical language.[19] Though Li had no personal connections at all to the "feeble" Chinese literary scene before he took the initiative to contact Zhou Zuoren, he admits that he was writing in response to the folksy doggerel of the

17 Li Jinfa, "Wenyi shenghuo de huiyi" 文藝生活的回憶, *Piaoling xianbi* 飄零閒筆 (Taipei: Qiaolian chubanshe, 1964): 1.

18 Ibid.

19 Li's background as a Hakka from Meixian, Guangdong, may have contributed both to his linguistic idiosyncrasies and his perpetual treatment as a cultural "other"; see Hayes Greenwood Moore, *Transfixing Forms: The Culture of Chinese Poetry and Poetics in Modern Chinese Literary History*, Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2009 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2009): 128-136.

early *baihua* poets; though he enjoyed Bing Xin's 冰心 (1900-1999) poetry, he says, he was unimpressed with Kang Baiqing 康白情 (1896-1959) and Hu Shi. (He misquotes Kang's "Grass" 草兒 to read, "The grass is in front, / The ox is behind" 草兒在前，牛兒在後[20] and cites Hu's couplet, "The buttered bread is really fresh, / Local tea, free of charge!" 牛油麵包頗新鮮，家鄉茶葉不費錢, as examples of the kind of poetry he found uninspiring.)[21] Later on, while the literary scene was becoming increasingly politicized, he asserted the value of individual expression: "When I write poems, I never worry about whether people will understand. I only seek to express the poetry in my bosom. ... I can't hope that everyone would understand it" 我作詩的時候，從沒有預備怕人家難懂，只求發泄盡胸中的詩意就是……我不能希望人人能了解.[22] Such a statement clearly left Li open to charges of unhealthy individualism or solipsism, which remained part of the official evaluation of his work up until the 1980s, when critics like Sun Yushi 孫玉石 and Zhou Liangpei 周良沛 were able to extract certain redeeming values: a patriotic homesickness in the Europe-educated youth, namely a realist impulse to depict the lives of ordinary people in Europe and to critique the social inequalities there. In Taiwan, Li's legacy was recovered sooner, especially by "surrealist" poet Yaxian 瘂弦 (b. 1932), who wrote about Li and interviewed him for

20 The second line should read, "The whip is behind" 鞭兒在後.

21 "Wenyi shenghuo de huiyi" 5.

22 Li Jinfa, "Shi geren linggan de jilubiao" 是個人靈感的記錄表, *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中國現代詩論, ed. Yang Kuanghan 楊匡漢 and Liu Fuchun 劉福春 (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1985): 1.250.

Epoch Poetry 創世紀 in the 1970s.[23]

Thus Li's place in literary history is a lonely one, with very few allies. Although he is almost always described as the "founder" of the Chinese Symbolist school, Li's direct influence on subsequent Chinese Symbolists is predominantly negative. The poet associated with Chinese Symbolism who generally receives the most positive evaluations, Dai Wangshu, actually bears little resemblance to Li in terms of the density of imagery or of linguistic contortions, and in fact Dai is often labeled a "Modernist" as distinct from "Symbolist." Du Heng 杜衡 writes in the preface to Dai's second poetry collection that Dai "thinks it is utterly impossible to find any of the excellent merits of Symbolist poetry in all the Chinese Symbolist poets of that time. Therefore he himself tries to avoid the same abuses when he writes";[24] "the Chinese Symbolist poets of that time" definitely includes Li. Ai Qing 艾青 wrote of Li in 1980, "Many of his poems were written overseas, and they seem like a foreigner wrote them. But he loved to use *wenyan* to write his free verse poetry, to the point that it is harder to understand than ancient Chinese poems" 他的很多詩是在外國寫的，也好像是外國人寫的；但他卻愛用文言寫自由體的詩，甚至比中國古詩更難懂.[25] Bian Zhilin, whose poetry has perhaps more in common with Li's, and who (as we have seen)

23 Yaxian 瘂弦, "Zhongguo Xiangzhengzhuyi de xianqu—shiguai Li Jinfa" 中國象徵主義的先驅－－「詩怪」李金髮, *Chuangshiji* 創世紀 33 (Jun. 1973); Li Jinfa, "Da Yaxian xiansheng ershi wen" 答瘂弦先生二十問, *Chuangshiji* 39 創世紀 (Jan. 1975): 3-10.

24 Quoted in Tu Kuo-ch'ing, "The Introduction of French Symbolism into Modern Chinese and Japanese Poetry," *Tamkang Review* X.3-4 (Spring/Summer 1980): 359.

25 Ai Qing 艾青, "Zhongguo xinshi liushi nian" 中國新詩六十年, *Wenyi yanjiu* 文藝研究 1980.5 (May 1980).

defended other poets against charges of obscurity, is even more extreme in distancing himself from China's first Symbolist, as he writes in English retrospectively on the subject of Western influence on modern Chinese poetry:

> To illustrate Dai Wangshu's success, it would be useful to contrast it with the utter failure of Li Jinfa. Li Jinfa's first collection of poems appeared in 1925, the same year as Xu Zhimo's first collection. It was indeed Li Jinfa who first introduced French symbolist poetry into China. Yet, perhaps to the surprise of some Western scholars and critics, I cannot help asserting candidly that his efforts were worse than fruitless and their influence on China's "New Poetry" during a certain period was pernicious. It is not that he lacked any poetic talent and had not somehow caught the aroma of the Symbolist poetry of the late Nineteenth Century. The fact is that his far from adequate knowledge of French and his no less inadequate mastery of his mother tongue, both in *Baihua* (the vernacular) and *Wenyan* (the literary language), did gross injustice to the French Symbolists. His "translation" [sic] from them and his "imitations" of them mystified the Chinese reading public as well as his followers so that so-called symbolist poetry was considered just a jumble of incomprehensible dazzling words devoid of meaning or logic. ... We had to wait for Dai Wangshu and a few others to dispel the mysterious clouds over such French Symbolists in their pioneering work and their own creative practice, and to know how to write poetry somewhat in the French way.[26]

Such disavowals by subsequent important Symbolist-inspired poets leave Li rather isolated in the tradition. Yet, based on what little writing about poetry he left, idiosyncrasy seems to have been an important part of Li's poetic practice. Huang Candao 黃參島, one Li's greatest early admirers, coined Li's nickname, the 'eccentric of poetry' *shiguai* 詩怪,[27] which is still in currency. An unflattering label when applied by most of Li's critics, it nonetheless suggests a singularity on the poetic scene in some minor way comparable to the 'sage of poetry' *shisheng* 詩聖 (Du Fu), or at least the 'demon of poetry' *shigui* 詩鬼 (Li He). Yet singularity is closely

26 Bian Zhilin, "The Development of China's 'New Poetry' and the Influence from the West," in *CLEAR* 4.1 (Jan., 1982): 154.

27 Since *guai*'s meanings can range from "anomaly" to "oddball" to "monster," "eccentric" is a relatively neutral translation of the word.

related to incomprehensibility; as the Chinese saying goes, a lofty tune has few to harmonize (*qugao hegua* 曲高和寡). He couldn't expect everyone to understand it, and very few did.

The charges of obscurity leveled against his poetry are the most constant feature of Li Jinfa criticism, to the point of cliché. The terms "Li Jinfa," "Symbolism," and various words implying obscurity became so intertwined in the discourse surrounding modern Chinese poetry that one scarcely needed to mention one before the others would surely follow; for instance, in 1959, decades after the fact, erstwhile New Poet and then chairman of the Chinese Writer's Association Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978) looked back in an off-handed and disingenuous way on Chinese New Poetry up to that point:

> New Poetry since May Fourth has included all different kinds of New Poetry, like the 'Crescent School,' the 'Symbolist School,' this school or that school. I can't even keep them straight. I don't know what school poems like Li Jinfa's belonged to, but they were totally impossible to understand, just like Hu Feng's essays.
>
> 五四以來的新詩有各種各樣的新詩，什麼新月派、象征派，這個派那個派的，我也弄不大清楚。像李金髮的詩不知道算什麼派，實在叫人不懂，跟胡風的文章一樣.[28]

In other words, by the middle of the century, 'Li Jinfa' had become a byword for literature that was difficult, decadent, willfully abstruse: the opposite not only of Hu Shi's principles for vernacular literature, but also of Mao Zedong's principles for proletarian literature. Xie Caijiang 謝采江, writing in 1928 under the assumed name Caochuan Weiyu 草川未雨 in

28 Guo Moruo, "Dangqian shige zhong de zhuyao wenti" 當前詩歌中的主要問題, *Renmin ribao* 人民日報 1959.02.13. Needless to say, Guo knew very well what school Li Jinfa's poems belonged to, though he may not have wished to admit more than a passing familiarity with such politically questionable literature.

his *Yesterday and Today on the Chinese New Poetry Scene* 中國新詩壇的昨日和今日,[29] recalls the initial reaction to Li Jinfa.

> After Li Jinfa's *Drizzle* came out [in 1925], hardly anyone noticed, and no one talked about it. I remember the year before last (1926) someone wrote a remark that wasn't particularly damaging in a little journal put out by the Creation Society, that he was annoyed the minute he saw the characters "Jinfa" [golden hair]. In the past year, publishing activity has suddenly increased and plenty of new journals have appeared. People have started mentioning Li's poetry, but no matter whether they approve of and admire him or not, they all say they can't understand his poetry, that his poems are hard to interpret, or that his collections are pretty bizarre.
>
> 李金髮的『微雨』出版後沒有人注意，也不曾有人提到過。記得是前年（一九二七年）罷，在創造社一份小刊物上有一段説過關於『金髮』的無關痛癢的話，説是看見『金髮』二字，便覺得討厭。只是近一年，出版事業勃興，新出的刊物真不少，有人提到李詩來，但是無論贊成他的欽佩他的，或不贊成或不欽佩他的，都説他的詩難懂，都知道他的詩是難索解的，或有人説他的詩集子中間是比較怪僻的[30]

Xie's evaluation seems fairly accurate; according to Li Jinfa's early critics, both pro and con, "The fact that Li's poetry is hard to understand is recognized by everyone" 李先生的詩的不大好懂，是被大家公認的了 (Zhong Jingwen);[31] "Everybody knows Li Jinfa's poems are inscrutable" 誰都知道李金髮的詩是很難索解的 (Zhao Jingshen);[32] "Not a single one of Li's poems can be understood in its entirety" 李金髮的詩沒有一首可以完全教人了解 (Su

29 Zhang Daming 張大明, *Zhongguo xianzhengzhuyi bainian shi* 中國象徵主義百年史 (Kaifeng: Henan daxue chubanshe, 2007).

30 Caochuan Weiyu 草川未雨, *Zhongguo xinshitan de zuori he jinri* 中國新詩壇的昨日和今日 (Beiping: Haiyin shuju, 1929), quoted in Li Liming 李立明, "Xiangzhengpai shiren Li Jinfa" 象徵派詩人李金髮 in *Wentan* 文壇 316 (July 1971): 33-34.

31 Zhong Jinwen 鍾敬文, "Li Jinfa di shi" 李金髮底詩, *Yiban* 一般 1.12 (15 Dec., 1926): 617.

32 Zhao Jingshen 趙景深, "Li Jinfa de *Weiyu*" 李金髮的微雨, *Xin wenxue guoyan lu* 新文學過眼錄 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004): 139.

Xuelin);[33] "Everyone who's read his poems, even people with very good literary cultivation, has no idea what he's saying, and not knowing what [the poet] is saying is the distinguishing feature of so-called Symbolism" 凡是讀過他的詩的人，縱有很好的文學素養的，也不知道他所説的是什麼，而唯其不知道他所説的是什麼，這正是所謂「象徵派」的特色 (Luo Muhua).[34] Huang Candao, Li's most admiring early reader, put a more positive spin on the matter: "Li's poems are fluid, multifarious, mutable, mystical, ingenious. They are not like ordinary poems which can be understood at once" 李先生的詩，是流動的，多元的，變易的，神祕化，天才化的，不是如普通的詩，可以一日了然的.[35]

Though we do not wish to assume an air of superiority towards readers who find Li Jinfa's poetry difficult or obscure, we can still locate some potential sources of confusion that might have put these readers off. First, in a sense, critics who accuse Li of obscurity are actually taking his own word for it—because when critics characterize his poetry as *menglong*, they are using one of his favorite descriptive words. That is to say, Li does not merely withhold information, creating an atmosphere of vagueness; rather, one of the hallmarks of Li's poetry is that the reader is almost constantly told or reminded about what the poet is withholding. Descriptions may feature something which we are told we cannot make out, and speech is constantly too quiet or confidential to include us. In this sense, Li is perhaps

33 Su Xuelin 蘇雪林, "Lun Li Jinfa de shi" 論李金髮的詩, *Xiandai* 現代 3.3 (Mar. 1933): 348.

34 Luo Muhua 羅慕華, "Tan Zhongguo Xiangzhengpai shi" 談中國象徵派詩, *Beiping chenbao* 19 July 1934, n.p.

35 Huang Candao 黃參島, "*Weiyu* ji qi zuozhe" 微雨及其作者, *Meiyu* 美育 2 (1928): 211.

deliberately abstruse ("I can't expect everyone to understand it"), or at least deliberately eschewing clear exposition. Li's "On a Train in Lyon" 里昂車中 includes a classic example of Li's brand of poetic description:

> Faint lamplight shines bleakly on everything,
> Turning her pink forearm gray-white.
> Her soft hat's shadow covers her face,
> It is like the moon disappearing behind clouds!
>
> Reflections of the hazy world,
> In a moment which cannot be arrested,
> Have left us far behind,
> We give them no thought.
>
> The weariness of the valley, only the remaining moonlight
> And the waving of the branches
> Can grant it sleep.
> The pale green of the grassy ground reflects on the cuckoo's wings;
> The clatter of the car's wheels tears through all the still,
> Lights from the distant city shine on the mouth of the little window,
> They are powerless to reveal the sleeper's small cheek
> Nor the worry deep in her heart.
>
> Ah, heartless night,
> You have folded up my wings.
> The sound of the stream,
> The drifting of the clouds,
> Will they ever make my golden hair fade?
>
> In an unknown, far-off place,
> The moon shines like a palace roof, striving upward.
> Ten thousand people laugh for joy,
> Ten thousand people cry for sorrow,
> Hiding together—the indistinct shadows
> What is fresh blood,
> What is fireflies?
>
> 細弱的燈光淒清地照遍一切，
> 使其粉紅的小臂，變成灰白。
> 軟帽的影兒，遮住她們的臉孔，
> 如同月在雲裡消失！

朦朧的世界之影，
在不可勾留的片刻中，
遠離了我們
毫不思索。

山谷的疲乏惟有月的餘光，
和長條之搖曳，
使其深睡。
草地的淺綠，照耀在杜鵑的羽上；
車輪的鬧聲，撕碎一切沈寂；
遠市的燈光閃耀在小窗之口，
惟無力顯露倦睡人的小頰，
和深沈在心之底的煩悶。

啊，無情之夜氣，
蜷伏了我的羽翼。
細流之鳴聲，
與行雲之漂泊，
長使我的金髮褪色麼？

在不認識的遠處，
月兒似鉤心鬥角的遍照，
萬人歡笑，
萬人悲哭，
同躲在一具兒，——模糊的黑影
辨不出是鮮血，
是流螢！[36]

The poem revolves around several light sources which illuminate or fail to illuminate the scene inside and outside the car. The first stanza presents the most complicated play of light and shadow, where the lamplight (which, if it is the same as the lamplight in line 14, is coming from the distant city outside the train) manages to shine "everywhere," despite being "faint." Yet the lamplight highlights the woman accompanying the speaker by erasure: her pink arm fades to gray, and the shadows cast on her face by her hat "disappear like the moon behind clouds." Rather than revealing her face, the lamplight erases the contrast of light and shadow that had, we imagine, delineated her form into dim, gray, indistinctness. Li's simile,

36 Li Jinfa 李金髮, *Li Jinfa shiji* 李金髮詩集 (Chengdu: Sichuan wenyi chubanshe, 1987): 19.

"like the moon behind the clouds," is especially fortuitous, as it describes precisely the etymology of the word *menglong* (see above), which, it happens, is the first word of the very next line, following the stanza break. What Li accomplishes in this scene is to hide through illumination, or to reveal through obscuring. Li's descriptions show us their scene, but only in a dim, indistinct way, and with a strong sense of what is remaining hidden; in a very concrete sense, Li's poetry is *menglong*. The ambiguity of the usage of this word in the next stanza—is "the hazy [*menglong*] world" inherently *menglong*, or is it *menglong* because it has "left us," because we "give [it] no thought"?—develops the technique further, describing the world in order to fail to describe it, mentioning it in order to fail to think of it. By the end of the poem, the final light source (fireflies) cannot be distinguished from the evidence of a terrible calamity (fresh blood).

In another move to inform the reader of what he fails to inform them, Li is also fond of thematizing spoken communication, but mostly as something intimate and exclusive. Li Jinfa prefaces his third collection, *Singing for Happiness*, with an amusing apology, which nonetheless provides some insight into his poetics:

> This collection is mostly love poems and an individual's depressive ramblings. Maybe a lot of readers will feel impatient with the "Thou thou I I" of the love poems, but perhaps this kind of public discussion of matters of the heart can help repair the apathy between the sexes in China. As for the individual's depressive ramblings, I hope the reader will permit me.
>
> 這集多半是情詩，及個人牢騷之言。情詩的"卿卿我我"或有許多閱者看得不耐煩，但這種公開的談心，或能補救中國人兩性間的冷淡；至於個人的牢騷，諒閱者必許我以權利的.[37]

Just as Li's mode of description is to make the reader aware of what he refuses to show him or

37 "Bian yan" 弁言, *Li Jinfa shiji* 439.

her, Li's approach to verbal communication is just as much about calling the reader's attention to a message or utterance which he or she is specifically excluded from understanding. As a result, words like *diyu* 低語 'low talk,' *siyu* 私語 'confidential talk,' and *eryu* 耳語 'speaking quietly into someone's ear' appear frequently in Li's poetry; things are constantly being said into someone or other's ear, such that we are unable to know what has been said. A typical example is "In the Corner" 牆角裡, which describes a pair of lovers whose forms and sounds merge in a moment of (partial) privacy.

In the corner,
Two forms,
Merging,
Hands with sleeves,
Feet with knees,
Murmuring,
Murmuring,
Is it
Speech
Or laughter?

——Do you still remember
When you told me you only loved me a little?
——The times have changed
——We're the unfortunates
Of the world,
——You could say that.
Their voices grow quieter,
Murmuring,
Only the night can understand.

牆角裡，
兩個形體，
混合着：
手兒聯袂，
腳兒促膝。
喁喁地，
喁喁地，
分不出

談說
抑是微笑。

——你還記得否，
說僅愛我一點？
——時候不同了，
——我們是
人間不幸者，
——也可以說啊。
聲音更小了，
喁喁地，
惟夜色能懂了。[38]

What is worthy of note in the poem is that while on the one hand the possibility of comprehension is ruled out ("Only the night can understand"), the poet cannot resist giving us at least a snatch of dialogue to interpret, to show us exactly what we are not privy to. Mostly it conforms to our expectations regarding ill-fated lovers ("the unfortunates of the world" suggests that they will have to part again soon), but by alluding to a changing context, the content of which we are specifically not told ("The times have changed"), the poem allows us to understand in general terms while reminding us we are not allowed to understand specifically. The first stanza, it deserves to be said, could be compared to "On a Train in Lyon" as it employs exactly the same technique executed with visual information rather than verbal information. In both cases, a sense of intimacy is created: two shadowy forms seemingly merge as they engage in a private moment together; two murmuring voices reduce in volume as their speakers move closer until they are indistinguishable from inarticulate laughter. The scene is there for us to look upon, after a fashion, but we are not invited to join in.

38 *Li Jinfa shiji* 481-2.

On the other hand, just as the difficulty in Du Yunxie's "Autumn" was tied to his use of metaphor, his extension of words' meanings, Li Jinfa has baffled critics with his unfamiliar comparisons. Scholar and novelist Zhao Jingshen reacts, in a fairly detailed analysis, to Li's "Misfortune" 不幸 in almost the exact way Zhang Ming reacted to "Autumn." "Misfortune" reads:

> We've snapped our souls' flowers,
> So we weep in the darkened room.
> The sunlight cannot dry our tears
> From beyond the hills, it only blows away
> The early morning mist. Ah, I'm so timid. Where are the nighttime doves singing?
> Bring your lyre here I'll tell it all my misfortune,
> So it can announce it wherever it goes.
>
> We have such clumsy language for our negotiations,
> But only your lyre can tell in detail
> A soul's collapse,——clear springtime understands.
> We know of nothing greater than truth,
> Together we open our hands, black night is whispering to us!
> The nighttime doves are here I'm afraid we'll have
> Causeless sorrow because of this.
>
> 我們折了靈魂的花，
> 所以痛哭在暗室裡。
> 嶺外的陽光不能曬乾
> 我們的眼淚，惟把清晨的薄霧
> 吹散了。啊，我真羞怯，夜鳩在那裡唱，
> 把你的琴來我將全盤之不幸訴給他，
> 使他遊行時到處宣佈。
>
> 我們有愚笨的語言使用在交涉上，
> 但一個靈魂的崩敗，惟有你的琴
> 能細訴，——晴春能了解。
> 除了真理，我們不識更大的事物，
> 一齊開張我們的手，黑夜正私語了！
> 夜鳩來了我恐我們因之得到
> 無端之哀戚。[39]

Li's somewhat erratic punctuation is reflected in the translation. We should recognize by now

39 *Li Jinfa shiji* 195.

some of Li's favorite concerns—to the "clumsy language" and the confidential "whispering" of the night, we can add the ambivalent power of expression provided by music. Both this poem and Li's more frequently referenced "Sorrow of the *Qin*" 琴的哀 are free rewritings of the scenario of Ruan Ji's 阮籍 (210-263) famous first "Singing My Feelings" poem, in which the speaker is troubled at night by sadness, leading him to arise and play the *qin* zither.[40] Li incorporates aspects of Ruan's scene (the wind, the birds) into his metaphorical universe; in "Misfortune" the wind fails to blow away his tears, and in "Sorrow of the *Qin*" it responds to his song, disrupting it. "Misfortune" complicates matters even more, merging the nighttime doves and the *qin*: it is the doves' song which is, apparently, the *qin* which the speaker wishes would convey his misfortunes. The degree to which these two overlapping images are meant to remain separate is highly unclear, and this is the point at which Zhao reports confusion. Zhao singles out one couplet as particularly difficult, explaining the difficulty as a question of pronoun and antecedent. He places what he believes to be the antecedents of the third-person pronoun *ta* in parentheses.

> Bring your *qin* here I'll tell it (*qin*) all of my misfortune,
> May it (*qin*) announce it everywhere when it roams.

40 Li's "Sorrow of the *Qin*" reads: 微雨濺濕簾幕，/正是濺濕我的心。/不相干的風，/踱過窗而作響，/把我的琴聲，/也震得不成音了！//奏到最高音的時候，/似乎預示人生的美滿。/露不出日光的天空，/白雲正搖蕩着，/我的期望將太陽般露出來。//我有一切的憂愁，/無端的恐怖，/她們並不能了解啊。/我若走到原野上時，/琴聲定是中止，或柔弱地繼續着.

The drizzles spatters on my curtain—/It is spattered on my heart./An irrelevant wind/Noisily striding across the window/Startles my *qin*'s tones/All out of tune!//When it reaches the highest pitch,/It seems to foretell of life's satisfaction./A sky that will not reveal the sun,/White clouds drifting,/My hopes will burst out like the sun.//I have every sorrow,/Causeless terror,/They can't understand./When I walk out to the plain,/The *qin*'s song will stop midway, or else softly continue. *Li jinfa shiji* 10-11.

把你的琴來我將全盤之不幸訴給他（琴），
使他（琴）游行時到處宣布.[41]

The *ni* (you) must refer to the *qin* player, and the *ta* (he/she/it) must refer to the *qin* itself. But this is unacceptable, because a *qin* cannot "roam," which makes him feel that perhaps *ta* should also refer to the player. But then shouldn't the pronouns be the same? Zhao proposes the following revision (or what he calls *yi* 譯, 'translation' or 'interpretation'):

> Bring your *qin* here I'll tell it all of my misfortune, so when you roam it can announce it everywhere.
>
> 把你的琴來我將全盤之不幸訴給他，在你游行時好使他到處宣布.[42]

The pronoun change completely removes an instance of personification, one of Li's favorite poetic tropes. In its place, Zhao substitutes a more fully elaborated metaphor of the *qin*, where the instrument now has also a player, who, as a human, is able to "roam." Yet Li's original lacks the figure of a *qin* player—the *qin* is merely a figure for the doves' musical voices, meaning that when we interpret the verb 'roam,' we must consider that the doves might be the implied subject. Then do doves roam? The meaning of the verb will be stretched no matter how we interpret the line.

This kind of figurative imprecision accounts for a large part of what critics consider difficult in Li's poetry. For instance, Li's signature piece "A Feeling" 有感 piles figurative images together in such a way as to make precise interpretation nearly impossible.

> Like fallen leaves splashing

41 Zhao 139-142.

42 Ibid.

blood on our
feet,

Life is
a smile
on the lips of death.

Beneath the half-dead moon,
drinking and singing,
throat-rending notes
Float away on the north wind.
Ah!
Go off consoling your beloved.

Open your window
Make her bashful
Dust from the road covers her
Adorable eyes.
Is this life's
bashfulness
and indignation?
Like fallen leaves splashing
blood on our
feet,

Life is
a smile
on the lips of death.

如殘葉濺
血在我們
腳上，

生命便是
死神脣邊
的笑。

半死的月下，
載飲載歌，
裂喉的音
隨北風飄散。
吁！
撫慰你所愛的去。

開你戶牖
　使其羞怯，
　　征塵蒙其
　　　可愛之眼了。
此是生命
　之羞怯
　　與憤怒麼？
如殘葉濺
　血在我們
　　腳上。

生命便是
　死神脣邊
　　的笑.[43]

Li liked the compound simile-metaphor of the first six lines, "Life is a smile on the lips of death," enough to use it both to open and close the poem.[44] Both halves of the simile contain a further metaphor: in the first three lines, autumn leaves are compared to blood splashed on our feet, and in the next three lines, life is (need we repeat it?) a smile on the lips of death. Actually attempting to read the two halves of the simile together yields confusing results: the leaves signify death against our shoes, which have been walking on life's journey (see ll. 15-19); they cling as a reminder of inevitable death. (Autumn foliage is another favorite topic of Li's.) Yet the second half of the simile is reversed, as it is the smile of life that features on death's face—a fleeting expression that seems to indicate something it does not divulge. While life is a momentary escape from death, death is a constant presence in life. This split point of view, a simile that operates from two different timeframes and perspectives, suggests

43 *Li Jinfa shiji* 535-6.

44 This kind of "circular form" has been popular throughout the history of New Poetry; see Michelle Yeh, *Modern Chinese Poetry: Theory and Practice since 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991): 100-101.

a more nuanced view of life and death than some critics have been willing to grant. Is life a flash of mirth in the midst of tragedy? Or a difficult journey after which death is a welcome respite? The undecidability of interpretation creates the complexity of the poem.

The Polemics of Obscurity

Claiming not to understand something is never a neutral statement, least of all during politically heightened times characterized by an insistence on linguistic transparency. In his defense of *menglong* poets against Zhang Ming's original attack, Bian Zhilin observed the power behind the charge of obscurity:

> After many years of interruption and even atrophy, these past two years ... a few new poems "not in uniform" gushed forth and wrestled away a corner of journal space. At once many poets and critics of stature denounced them in unison. The only reason for their opposition was that [the poems were] "hard to understand." For a long time in this country, the words "hard to understand" have exerted great pressure on a poet, so one shouldn't use them indiscriminately just because they happen to be handy.
>
> 新詩經過多年的停滯以至退化，近兩年……也湧現了一些並非‘穿了制服’的新詩，爭取到刊物上一角的位置。於是不少有地位的詩人和批評家馬上齊聲非議。反對的唯一理由是‘難懂’。長久以來，在國內，‘難懂’二字，對於一位詩人壓力很大，所以不要因為易用而隨便濫用.[45]

Here we can begin to unpack the polemical weight of such an accusation; to take for granted the intelligibility of a piece of writing is to take for granted the audience which might encounter it—in effect to erase the audience from the equation and substitute oneself and one's own response. Post-1949, this move is always made with explicit or implicit reference to the masses, who, it is assumed, have neither the patience nor the interest (nor, one could

45 "Jinri xinshi mianlin de yishu wenti" 134-5.

cynically conclude, the education nor the intelligence) to understand or appreciate difficult poetry. Such a totalitarian mode of reading comes as no surprise during the Mao era, but even during the Republican period, readership is scarcely taken into consideration. It is not true, perhaps, that *everyone* finds Li's poetry difficult, or considers that difficulty to be the end of the story (we will explore some exceptions below), but the critics who do find it difficult never fail to insist that *everyone* must find it difficult. It is a characteristic of criticism that demands intelligibility to deny the possibility of other readers' finding meaning in a difficult text—to impute one reader's failure to recognize meaning to the text (or more likely to the poet) and thereby close off any second-order discussion that could proceed. Luo Muhua 羅慕華, who wrote about Li Jinfa and Symbolist-inspired poetry in *Les contemporains* during Dai Wangshu's heyday in the 1930s, is exemplary. He recalls an exegesis he was asked to write of the chapter "On the Equality of Things" 齊物論 of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 for his university philosophy class. He received high marks for his work, but deep down he knew he didn't understand "On the Equality of Things" and that his exegesis was intentionally clouded with mystical Buddhist terminology; Luo accuses the Chinese Symbolist poets of an equivalent act of dishonesty. Luo suggests that he can spot nonsense because he, too, has written it, and if he does not allow that he might fail to see the full meaning of his own writing, then he certainly won't allow that he fails to see the full meaning of Li Jinfa's. We might paraphrase: not only don't *I* know what your poetry means—*you* don't know either; you just won't admit it.

A slightly more forgiving approach—though not by much—is to assume that the poet has some meaning in mind, but that he withholds the means to access it. This is the implication of Du Xuezhong's calling Li's poems "incomprehensible, trivial enigmas" (see above). Even a fairly sophisticated critic such as Su Xuelin, who wrote about Li both in 1933 in *Les contemporains* and again in 1959 in Taiwan, shares certain of these assumptions about poetry. In the latter article, which set off a lengthy debate in *Free Youth* 自由青年 about modernism in poetry that involved poets Ji Xian 紀弦 (1913-2013) and Qin Zihao 覃子豪 (1912-1963), Su approaches Li's poetry by means of an elaborate classical joke, a regulated verse poem which no one but the poet could possibly understand:

> The sun is warm; I watch three weavers.
> The wind blows high, they struggle two chambers.[46]
> A frog turned over, a white exiting, broad.
> An earthworm dead, a purple's growing—
> Poured out, listening to him play the *wutong* phoenix,
> Poem left off, I receive Jianzhang.[47]
> I return to sit in my room.
> Who cares if they fight to the death!
>
> 日煖看三織，風高鬬兩廂，
> 蛙翻白出濶，蚓死紫之長；
> 潑聽彈梧鳳，詩抛接建章，
> 歸來屋裡坐，打煞又何妨！[48]

Su explains that this is a poem attributed to the Song imperial relative Zhao Han. When his

46 Excuse this ungrammaticality. Choosing a preposition for "two chambers" would make the poem apparently easier to understand than it is. All the Gertrude Stein-ian touches throughout are likewise due to my attempt to keep the poem as difficult in English as it is in Chinese.

47 The reader can guess even without being certain that *jian zhang* 建章 is a name in this case, so I have translated it as one.

48 Su Xuelin 蘇雪林, "Xin shitan Xiangzhengpai chuangshizhe Li Jinfa" 新詩壇象徵派創始者李金髮, *Ziyou qingnian* 自由青年 22.1 (July 1959): 6.

friends read it and asked him to explain, he proceeds line-by-line, providing the context for the poem's composition. "The first line says there were three spiders weaving a net in the warm sunlight. I became lost in thought watching them. The second line says there were two sparrows fighting on the high wind; they fought from my eastern chamber to my western chamber and then from my western chamber back to my eastern chamber" 詩的第一句是說有三隻蜘蛛在和煖的陽光裡編織羅網，我不覺看得出神。第二句是說有兩隻鵲兒趁着高風相鬬，從我的東廂房鬬到西廂房，又從西廂房鬬到東廂房.[49] The explication continues in that manner for each line, providing information the reader could not possibly know. Some characters in the poem are even used for their shapes instead of their meanings: what seemed to say "a white exiting, broad" 白出闊 actually meant that the frog was in the shape of a broad white 出 (*chu* 'exit'); similarly "a purple's growing" 紫之長 is actually a long purple 之 (*zhi*, a particle indicating, among other things, possession). The final line of the explication sounds dangerously similar to Li's "I can't hope that everyone would understand it": "Since you haven't lived my life, you naturally don't understand what the poem says" 你們既沒有參與我的生活，當然不知詩中說得是些什麼話了.[50]

A reader who shares none of the poet's subjective experiences cannot understand any of the difficult parts of the poem—the meaning of its metaphors, the omitted subjects of its verbs, even the mode of reference of certain characters, which are occasionally used for their

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

shapes instead of their meanings. Su's example has almost nothing in common with a Li Jinfa poem, beginning right off the bat with underlying assumptions about poetry's autobiographicality, the reasons for linguistic compression, and the role of interpretation. Yet so many of Li's readers approach his poems from this set of assumptions, derived it would seem from a simplistic way of reading classical poetry. An anonymous respondent in the *Free Youth* debate, writing as *menwai han* 門外漢 ("guy outside the door," that is, 'non-specialist'), writes that Symbolist and Modernist Chinese poetry is like an enigma to which he cannot find the key. "Poets, please give the 'key' directly to us! Please don't play any more vague, obscure tricks with your language!" 詩人們，請把「鑰匙」直接交給讀者吧，不要再在文字上故弄那一套曖昧、朦朧的玄虛.[51]

Relatively few critics are willing to move the discussion past the basic question of what a poem means when encountering Li Jinfa, but some are able to put meaning aside temporarily in favor of something else. Most frequently, a critic may find an alternative to meaning: something that is communicated, but which is non-semantic, and which one cannot quite put one's finger on. This quality takes on different names with different critics. Zhong Jingwen says that Li's poetry being "not so easy to understand" is offset by something more nebulous, namely what Zhong calls "a dignified tone" 一股凝重的情味, which floats through Zhong's brain for a while after he reads each poem.[52] Zhao Jingshen is slightly more

51 Menwai Han 門外漢, "Zai tan muqian Taiwan xinshi" 再談目前台灣新詩, *Ziyou qingnian* 自由青年 22.8 (Feb. 1960): 11.

52 Zhong 617.

specific, citing with approval Li's "foreign color" *yiguo qingdiao* 異國情調, which is due to scarcely more than the use of certain words or phrases that imply a foreign setting.[53] Su Xuelin repeats this assessment, characteristically projecting onto it a biographical rationale: "Truly, most of Li's works were produced in places like Dijon, Paris, and Berlin, and the things he recounts, the scenes he describes are mostly foreign, so his poetry natural became something foreign."[54] In other words, Su's appreciation of the poetry is aided by the place of composition indicated at the end of the poem—just the very suggestion of a foreign land is enough to cast an exotic atmosphere behind the words of the poem. Zhu Ziqing explicitly sets the intangible qualities of a poem against its semantic meaning: "What he wishes to express isn't sense but feeling or emotion" 他要表現的不是意思而是感覺或情感.[55] (We will discuss Zhu Ziqing's approach to Li Jinfa and other difficult poetry in more detail below.)

What these readers identify in Li Jinfa is something very similar to what Empson calls "atmosphere": "something like a sensation which is not attached to any of the senses."[56]

> This may only be a statement of how they themselves applied their conscious attention when reading the poem; thus a musical chord is a direct sensation, but not therefore unanalysable into its separate notes even at the moment of sensing. It can be either felt or thought; the two

53 Zhao 140.

54 "Lun Li Jinfa de shi."

55 Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, "Daoyan" 導言, *Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi* 中國新文學大系 (Hong Kong: Xianggang wenxue yanjiu she, 1972): 8.3352.

56 William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977): 16.

> things are similar but different; and it requires practice to do both at once. Or the statement might, one cannot deny, mean that there has been some confusion of the senses. But it may mean something more important, involving a distinction between 'sensation' and 'feeling'; that what the poet has conveyed is no assembly of grammatical meanings, capable of analysis, but a 'mood,' an 'atmosphere,' a 'personality,' an attitude to life, an undifferentiated mode of being.[57]

On the one hand, Empson is willing to concede that some poets or poems might convey something like an "atmosphere" rather than one or more "meanings." Yet Empson is also quite insistent that such a conclusion is no place to halt one's analysis. "Though there may be an atmosphere to which analysis is irrelevant, it is not necessarily anything very respectable."[58] Of the critics mentioned above, only Zhu Ziqing takes his analysis much further; he is the subject of the next section.

Approaching Obscurity: Structural Disjuncture and "Unthreaded Beads"

Zhu Ziqing was one of the most consistent and important defenders of the Chinese Symbolists, a group he identified as including poets influenced to varying degrees by the previous half century of French literature, though they hardly comprised a "school": in addition to Li Jinfa, there were Creation Society members Wang Duqing 王獨清 (1898-1940), Feng Naichao 馮乃超 (1901-1983) and Mu Mutian 穆木天 (1900-1971) (who actually were closely associated) and Dai Wangshu. Zhu's defense of Symbolist poetics in the

57 Ibid. 16-17.

58 Ibid. 21.

introduction to the poetry volume of the *Anthology of Chinese New Literature* 中國新文學大系 was probably the first serious attempt to respond to objections from critics and readers that Li Jinfa's poetry was hard to understand, an argument he would elaborate over time. According to Zhu, the problem was formal, residing in the organization of phrases and images:

> [Li's] poems do not have the usual structure [*zhangfa* 章法]. You can understand them part by part, but if you put it all together, it doesn't mean anything. What he wishes to express isn't meaning but feeling or emotion; it's as if he'd taken a string of beads of all sizes and colors and hidden the string, and you have to try to string them up for yourself.
>
> 他的詩沒有尋常的章法，一部分一部分可以懂，合起來卻沒有意思。他要表現的不是意思而是感覺或情感；仿佛大大小小紅紅綠綠一串珠子，他卻藏起那串兒，你得自己穿著瞧.[59]

Arthur Symons describes the difficulty of Mallarmé's poetry in similar terms and may have provided the inspiration for Zhu's thinking.

> Mallarmé was obscure, not so much because he wrote differently, as because he thought differently, from other people. His mind was elliptical, and, relying with undue confidence on the intelligence of his readers, he emphasized the effect of what was unlike other people in his mind by resolutely ignoring even the links of connection that existed between them.[60]

Like other critics who seek to identify the intangible element communicated by a Li Jinfa poem in the absence of an easily stated "meaning," Zhu makes recourse to what he calls "feeling" *ganjue* 感覺 or "emotion" *qinggan* 情感. The metaphor of the loose beads, each beautiful and distinct but requiring some effort to combine into a sensible whole, is an oft-quoted assessment of Li's poetic craft. In a way, it is not fundamentally different from Luo

59 *Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi* 8.3351-2.

60 Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (New York: Dutton, 1958): 181.

Muhua or Su Xuelin's complaints that Li's poems are riddles, puzzles from which the poet has intentionally removed essential information. Yet Zhu's approach, aside from attaching a positive value to suggestive rather than denotative verse, emphasizes the possibility of multiple, personal interpretations. The phrase I have translated, "You have to try to string them up for yourself," is literally, "You have to string them up yourself *and see*." According to Zhu, Li Jinfa's poetry gives the reader the opportunity to experiment—a rare effort to account for the reader's role in producing poetic meaning, and an invitation to see for oneself what can happen.

Zhu Ziqing says that Li's *zhangfa*, his method of structuring his works, is not usual, but if Li Jinfa's poems are fragmented or disjointed, then in what way? They are certainly quite different from the poems of Li's contemporary, the Laforgue-inspired Creation Society poet Mu Mutian. These stanzas from his representative work, "Pale Bells Toll" 蒼白的鐘聲, illustrate starkly what kind of grammatically disjunctive poem was possible in Chinese in the 1920s, and how Li's poems employ an entirely different repertoire of techniques:

> Pale bell tolls rotten haze
> Disperse ring in the desolate hazy valley
> ——Withered grass a thousand layers ten thousand——
> Listen far-off absurd ancient bells
> Listen a thousand tolls ten thousand
>
> Ancient bells flutter away on the waves' shining
> Ancient bells flutter away on the gray-green white poplars' branches
> Ancient bells flutter away on the wind's rustling
> ——Moon's reflection carefree carefree——
> Ancient bells flutter away on the white clouds' fluttering
>
> 蒼白的 鐘聲 衰腐的 朦朧

疏散 玲瓏 荒涼的 朦朧的 谷中
——衰草 千重 萬重——
聽 永遠的 荒唐的 古鐘
聽 千聲 萬聲

古鐘 飄散 在水波之皎皎
古鐘 飄散 在灰綠的 白楊之梢
古鐘 飄散 在風聲之蕭蕭
——月影 逍遙 逍遙——
古鐘 飄散 在白雲之飄飄[61]

It has been observed how Mu employs syllables ending in the velar nasal (*Hanyu pinyin* 'ng'), such as *cang*, *zhong*, *sheng*, *menglong*, etc., to imitate the tolling of the bell.[62] But what interests us here is Mu's propensity for parataxis, that is, placing nouns or verbs alongside each other without connecting or relating them explicitly, and his establishment of continuity through simple repetition and parallelism rather than logical or grammatical progression. None of these techniques could be more foreign to Li Jinfa's poetry, right down to Mu's expressionistic typographic spacing in place of punctuation, as opposed to Li's commas and semicolons.

If Li Jinfa's poems are disjunctive, therefore, they are not so in any of these ways, or at least not on these levels. Li's fragmentation must be on a higher, organizational level. Zhu explains more closely his understanding of Symbolist poetics, saying

> The Symbolists are trying to express exquisite scenes; metaphor is their lifeblood, that is "distant comparisons" and not "comparisons close at hand."[63] Here, near and far refer not to

61 Mu Mutian 穆木天, *Mu Mutian juan* 穆木天卷, ed. Zhou Liangpei 周良沛, Zhongguo xinshi ku 中國新詩庫 1 (Wuhan: Changjiang wenyi chubanshe, 1988): 34.

62 Harry Allan Kaplan, *The Symbolist Movement in Modern Chinese Poetry*, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1983 (Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 1983): 208.

63 *Analects* 6.28: "Being able to draw analogies from what is close at hand, one could say this is the method of

> the substance of the comparison but to the method of the comparison; they can see similarities between two things that ordinary people would consider different. They discover new connections between things and then use the most economical method of organizing these connections into a poem. "Most economical" means they leave out connecting words and allow the reader to build a bridge with his own imagination. Someone who isn't used to this will just see a dish of sand, but it isn't sand; it's an organism. To see the organism, you must have some cultivation and training. Once you've understood the poem, then you can say if it's good or bad—and naturally there are bad ones.
>
> 象徵詩派要表現的是些微妙的情境，比喻是他們的生命；但是「遠取譬」而不是「近取譬」。所謂遠近不指比喻的材料而只比喻的方法；他們能在普通人以為不同的事物中間看出同來。他們發見事物間的新關係，並且用最經濟的方法將這關係組織成詩；所謂「最經濟的」就是將一些聯絡的字句省掉，讓讀者運用自己的想像力搭起橋來。沒有看慣的只覺得一盤散沙，但實在不是沙，是有機體。要看出有機體，得有相當的修養與訓練，看懂了纔能說作得好壞——壞的自然有.[64]

The Chinese expression "a dish of sand" 一盤散沙 means a jumble, something lacking order or cohesion. Zhu's use of this analogy has somewhat different implications from the earlier "string of beads": on the one hand, grains of sand are like beads, in that they are discrete units, more or less meaningless on their own, but capable of being arranged into some kind of order. On the other hand, though, as beads have shrunk to grains of sand, they have both increased in number and lost their inherent value; where we once had a small collection of beautiful fragments to assemble, we are now faced with an undifferentiated mass and called upon to see an "organism" (*youjiti* 有機體). Zhu seems to have wished to emphasize, in this case, the complexity of the poem as he sees it—one cannot, he suggests, merely go about assembling organs any old which way, much less cells or atoms. To create a living thing from a dish of sand: this is more the work of the Old Testament deity than an arts and crafts enthusiast. There is still "imagination," but imagination is not enough; in the same year, Zhu

benevolence."

64 Zhu Ziqing, *Xinshi zahua* 新詩雜話 (Hong Kong: Taiping shuju, 1963): 2.

wrote an article expressing the necessity of patience and training on the part of the reader.

> In the first half of this year [1936], quite a few gentlemen have discussed the problem of communication in poetry. Some say poetry should be clear, while some others say poetry cannot and need not always be clear the way prose is. ... Communication in poetry bears a strong relationship to metaphor and to formal organization. Poets' metaphors need to be original, or at least present a new [take] on an old [trope]. The organization has to be new as well, it has to change. So [the reader] will feel unaccustomed, feel that it's hard to understand. Actually most poems can be understood, if you read them carefully a few times.
>
> 今年上半年，有好些位先生討論詩的傳達問題。有些説詩應該明白清楚，有些説，詩有時候不能也不必像散文一樣明白清楚。……詩的傳達，和比喻及組織關係甚大。詩人的譬喻要新創，至少變故為新，組織也總要新，要變。因此就覺得不習慣，難懂了。其實大部分的詩，細心看幾遍，也便可明白的.[65]

Again, there is the argument that Symbolist poetry is organized in an unfamiliar way, but here Zhu emphasizes the education of the reader. Once a reader devotes some time and effort to the reading of a Symbolist poem, Zhu suggests, he or she will begin to "understand" the relationships outlined in the poem and thus the poem's meaning, and, presumably, after reading many such poems and gaining practice, a reader can learn to see a Symbolist poem for the "organism" it is, rather than a shapeless mess.

So what does an organism look like? What do you get when you string up the beads? Now let us consider readings of two difficult, potentially *menglong* poems by Bian Zhilin, one by Zhu Ziqing and one contained in a postface composed by the poet himself.

The Limits of Interpretation

In "Understanding Poetry" 解詩, Zhu Ziqing argues that most apparently difficult poems are not so difficult if one spends a little time with them, a point which he illustrates

65 *Xinshi zahua* 4.

by interpreting Bian Zhilin's elliptical, allusive poem, "The Organization of Distance" 距離的組織.[66] The poem reads,

> I want to go upstairs alone and read *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*
> When suddenly the star of Rome's fall appears in the newspaper.
> Newspaper drops. Map opens, and I remember the instructions of a person far away.
> The evening scenery he sent is also gray and hazy.
> (When I awake, the sky is turning dark, nothing to do, must be a friend stopping by.)
> Gray sky. Gray sea. Gray road.
> Where am I? I can't test a clump of soil beneath a lamp.
> Suddenly I hear my name outside a 1000 doors.
> I'm so tired! Has someone messed with my boat in a dish?
> My friend brings along the promise of snow and five o'clock.
>
> 想獨上高樓讀一遍"羅馬興亡史"，
> 忽有羅馬滅亡星出現在報上。
> 報紙落。地圖開，因想起遠人的囑咐。
> 寄來的風景也暮色蒼茫了。
> （醒來天欲暮，無聊，一訪友人吧。）
> 灰色的天。灰色的海。灰色的路。
> 哪兒了？我又不會向燈下驗一把土。
> 忽聽得一千重門外有自己的名字。
> 好累呵！我的盆舟沒有人戲弄嗎？
> 友人帶來了雪意和五點鍾。[67]

Though Zhu's effort to explain the poem is interesting, it falls short in several ways. First, Zhu mainly rehashes information Bian himself provides in footnotes, for instance that the "star of Rome's fall" refers to a newspaper story which mentions that the light from a star at the time of the fall of the Roman empire is only now reaching earth. Second, Zhu's original contribution to the interpretation of the poem is to explain that certain images from the poem are representations (a picture on a postcard) or dreams (the first line of Zhu's commentary is "This poem describes a daydream"). Either way, Zhu has only succeeded in

66 *Xinshi zahua* 7-8.

67 *Xinshi zahua* 6-7; Bian Zhilin, *Shinian shicao: 1930-1939* 十年詩草：1930－1939 (Hong Kong: Weiming shuwu, 1942): 85-6.

devising a situation where the juxtapositions of the poem can all occur simultaneously; the site of their conflict is moved from the poem, which must be interpreted by the reader, to the psychological state of the speaker in the poem. However, the discomfort created by the initial clashes in the poem remains. This interpretation understands a poem less as an organism and more as an enigma—as if the scene of "The Organization of Distance" will come into focus if we can just find the right perspective.

If we are looking for a poem as a living organism, Bian's short quatrain "Fossilized Fish" 魚化石 is perhaps an ideal example:

> I want to have the shape of your embrace,
> I often melt in the contours of the water.
> Do you really love me like a mirror?
> Only when we're far apart are there fossilized fish.
>
> 我要有你的懷抱的形狀，
> 我往往溶化於水的線條。
> 你真像鏡子一樣地愛我呢。
> 你我都遠了乃有了魚化石。[68]

Bian's postface to the poem is really just a collection of allusions to a wide variety of texts and authors to which he invites comparison, in a manner that risks obscuring more than illuminating. Explaining the poem, Bian highlights in the interaction of self and other, something he evokes through a pair of quotations: "It makes me think of Eluard's 'She has the form of my palm,/ She has the color of my eyes.' We [Chinese] have Sima Qian's 'A woman adorns herself for the one whom she pleases' 我想起愛呂亞(P. ELUARD)的『她有

68 *Shinian shicao* 93.

我的手掌的形狀，她有我的眸子的顏色』。我們有司馬遷的『女為悅己者容』.[69] At the same time as the poem and its commentary dramatize the reciprocal gaze of two individuals, they also evoke the mutual fascination shared by China and its Western other, as Sima Qian's quotation about duty and recognition (the other half, which Bian leaves out, is "A knight dies for the one who recognizes his merit" 士為知己者死) is placed in dialog with an intimate love poem by a modern French surrealist. Bian provides a model for such interaction in his preface to the collection *A Record of Carving Insects* 雕蟲紀曆: "I write vernacular poetry in new forms, so we should say it is 'Europeanized.' ... But then it is certainly also 'classicized.' ... The way I see it, the problem is finding out if in writing poems we can 'change the classics,' 'change Europe'" 我寫白話新體詩，要説是‘歐化’……那麼也未嘗不‘古化’。……就我自己論，問題是看寫詩能否‘化古’，‘化歐’.[70] "Change the classics" and "change Europe" are puns on "Europeanized" and "classicized," made by reversing the order of syllables: *Ouhua* 歐化 to *hua'ou* 化歐, *guhua* 古化 to *huagu* 化古. Persistence and change are, furthermore, exactly the binary which motivates the image of the fossil: "When a fish turns into a fossil, the fish isn't the same fish it used to be, and neither is the stone" 魚成化石的時候，魚非原來的魚，石也非原來的石了.[71] This

69 *Shinian shicao* 211. The Eluard poem is from "Lady Love"; see Mary Ann Caws, *Surrealist Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002): 209. The Sima Qian quotation is from the "Biographies of Assassins" 刺客列傳 of the *Records of the Grand Historian* 史記.

70 Bian Zhilin, *Diaochong jili 1930-1958* 雕蟲紀曆：1930－1958 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1979): 15.

71 *Shinian shicao* 212.

conceit spurs Bian to further intertextual associations, from Du Fu 杜甫 ("As the water flows, my mind is without striving;/ My thoughts slow down with the clouds" 水流心無競，雲在意俱遲), to Su Shi 蘇軾 ("Its tracks are left on the snowy mud,/ but when the goose flies away, how will I know where it's gone?" 泥上偶然留指爪，鴻飛那復計東西), to the *Book of Changes* 易經 ("As begetter of all begetting, it is called change" 生生之謂易[72]). All three sources deal with persistence and change, motion and stillness. An organism grows and changes; it incorporates foreign matter and sheds parts of itself, but in some essential way, it maintains its identity. Even after it has died, a sea creature's body may gradually fill with minerals, slowly transforming into something that is no longer a fish even as it is still the same fish—and from a wide enough perspective, the world is all like this, "change is the begetter of all begetting." A poem is simultaneously a well-defined, highly-structured, autotelic whole, something that contains its own interpretation inside itself by performing its own meaning (as "Fossilized Fish" does); and it is something composed out of fragments that belong to other structures, something permeable and easily dissolved. A poem as organism is reducible to neither its form nor its content, just as the fish both is and is not the physical shape that becomes fossilized, but rather exists as something dynamic, something produced in and through creative acts of reading.

And yet, if the initial problem was that his poems are hard to understand, then Bian has certainly dodged the question. As if suddenly troubled by the never-ending network of

72 Cary F. Baynes, *The I Ching or Book of Changes: The Richard Wilhelm Translation* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1965): 322.

associations produced by his own four-line poem, Bian breaks off his postface abruptly: "Does the 'you' in the poem refer to the stone? Does it refer to the woman's lover? It seems like more than that. What else then? Let me think. Forget it. This is already enough" 詩中的「你」就代表石嗎？就代表她的他嗎？似不僅如此，還有甚麼呢？待我想想看，不想了。這樣就夠了.[73] Like Tao Yuanming 桃淵明, who leaves off "Drinking Wine (5)" 飲酒詩之五 with a shrug—"There is real meaning in all of this, but when I want to express it I forget the words" 此中有真意，欲辨已忘言—Bian gives up trying to explain. The suggestion of the ineffability of profound meaning may be calculated and performative (Tao Yuanming "forgot the words" after composing five couplets of five-syllable rhyming verse), but it is a legitimate rejoinder to readers who insist on easily paraphrasable content.

Conclusions: Intelligibility, Figurative Language, and Language at the Edges

Throughout this discussion of poetic obscurity, we have repeatedly bumped against the persistent expectation that a poem has a meaning which the poet wishes to tell the reader, and as we discussed in chapter one, this expectation has dominated a large amount of poetry criticism in twentieth century China. For a sizable portion of Chinese-speaking readers from a variety of political backgrounds, poetic language exists to express meaning, and its failure to do so is considered a source of frustration and annoyance. In an article about the problem of communication in modern Chinese poetry, Michel Hockx proposes that the reason strange or original metaphorical imagery is so disturbing to Chinese readers is because of readers'

73 *Shinian shicao* 212.

expectations:

> Modern Chinese poetry fails to satisfy readers because it does not, or not always, fulfill the poetic function which many readers would want it to fulfill, which is a communicative function. To put it bluntly, poems are seen by many not as texts which are inherently difficult and require interpretation, but as texts which communicate a certain message, or a certain sentiment, and if this communication is hindered, for instance because the language is too abstruse or the images are too strange, this affects the value of the poetic experience.[74]

Hockx is speaking about his experience reading Menglong poetry in the 1980s, but the words certainly seem applicable to many of the critics we have discussed so far, from Zhao Jingwen to Su Xuelin to Zhang Ming. No doubt, the perceived or expected "message" of a poem is often quite central to many readers' enjoyment, and the absence of a clearly communicated message leads to defensiveness or dismissal, as we have already seen. Yet at the same time, not even the crankiest critic seems likely to suggest that a poem might as well be replaced with a summary of its contents, so the communicative is not the only function a poem might fulfill, even for extremely naive readers. To return to an example from the beginning of this chapter, Chairman Mao's line, "She [the plum] smiles in the grove," would probably meet with not only comprehension but approval from many readers who do likely place emphasis on the communicative function in poetry. A more suggestive observation is Hockx's report, based on admittedly anecdotal evidence, that he often found that otherwise quite sophisticated Chinese readers were unable to help him parse even the grammar of a poem when only its imagery, and not its grammar, were unusual or unfamiliar.[75] The

74 Michel Hockx, "To *Tong* or Not to *Tong*: The Problem of Communication in Modern Chinese Poetics," *Monumenta Serica* 53 (2005): 262.

75 Ibid. 271.

possibility that semantic difficulty might inhibit a reader's ability to understand the grammatical structure of a sentence is surprising and seems contrary to the notion that form (grammar) and content (meaning) might be separated, that problems affecting one could avoid affecting the other.

Such a phenomenon, if true, would go to the heart of the Structuralist understanding of form and content, for example Noam Chomsky's principle of modularity, elaborated in his 1957 work *Semantic Structures*. In that work, Chomsky provides an example, grown quite famous since, to show that an uninterpretable sentence could still be grammatical, and therefore that the semantic and syntactic functions are modular and independent: "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously."[76] Unlike "Furiously sleep ideas green colorless," Chomsky argues, while the latter sentence is ungrammatical, the former sentence can be recognized as completely grammatical, even though neither sentence makes any sense. Students of poetry and figurative language in general may feel that, even if we can agree on what is grammatical or ungrammatical, Chomsky has attempted to make an untenable distinction between intelligible and unintelligible. The purported unintelligibility of Chomsky's first sentence depends on "selection violations"—cases where semantic categories are incompatible, though grammatical categories may agree. For instance, on a literal level, only physical objects can have color, so "green ideas" is a selection violation. But on a figurative level, "green ideas" might actually be a meaningful phrase.[77] In fact, Chinese linguist Yuen Ren Chao (Zhao

76 Noam Chomsky, *Semantic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965): 15.

77 "Furiously sleep ideas green colorless," seems, as well, not only not ungrammatical but totally allowable in

Yuanren 趙元任, 1892-1982), who himself took quite an interest in poetry, including New Poetry, showed in 1971 the possibility of providing context to "make sense out of nonsense":

> I have a friend who is always full of ideas, good ideas and bad ideas, fine ideas and crude ideas, old ideas and new ideas. Before putting his new ideas into practice, he usually sleeps over them to let them mature and ripen. However, when he is in a hurry, he sometimes puts his ideas into practice before they are quite ripe, in other words, while they are still green. Some of his green ideas are quite lively and colorful, but not always, some being quite plain and colorless. When he remembers that some of his colorless ideas are still too green to use, he will sleep over them, or let them sleep, as he puts it. But some of those ideas may be mutually conflicting and contradictory and when they sleep together in the same night they get into furious fights and turn the sleep into a nightmare. Thus my friend often complains that his colorless green ideas sleep furiously.[78]

We can see that Chao's response to Chomsky is very similar to the styles of reading we have put forward as approaches to *menglong*. Where Zhao Jingshen says, "A *qin* cannot roam," Zhu Ziqing says, "You have to try to string them up for yourself." Where Chomsky says, "An idea cannot be green," Yuen Ren Chao says, "Let's see if we can think of ways in which an idea could be green."[79] Notably, Chao's interpretation is not definitive or singular: his point is not to fix the line's meaning, but rather to show how meaning could come out of it. Whether or not the version he presents here is final or satisfactory, we could propose any number of alternative readings to explain what initially seemed inexplicable. Our willingness to put those readings forward may be the measure of how comfortable we are with *menglong*.

---

poetry, where inversions of subject and verb and of modifier and modified are acceptible.

78 Rosemary Levenson and Yuen Ren Chao, *Yuen Ren Chao, Chinese Linguist, Phonologist, Composer, & Author* (Berkeley: Regional Oral History Office, 1977): 222.

79 Paul De Man paraphrases Empson's commentary on Andrew Marvell's phrase "a green thought in a green shade": "the recourse to the modifier 'green' to qualify what is then created by thought, re-introduces the pastoral world of innocence, of 'humble, permanent, undeveloped nature which sustains everything, and to which everything must return'" ("The Dead End of Formalist Criticism" 239). Should we wonder if ideas can be green?

Perhaps the conclusion to be drawn is that, read the 'wrong' way, any figurative language is unintelligible, and read the 'right' way, anything unintelligible is merely figurative. The issue depends on familiar questions of identity and difference, of the ontological boundaries between conceptual categories; speaking about the question of allegory in traditional Chinese aesthetics, Haun Saussy asks, "What are categories but sets of allowable moves with the verb 'is'? And how are the many different categorical maps (maps not, by the way, coterminous with cultures or languages) to be reconciled except by allowing that verb to mean more than one thing at the same time?"[80] Saussy suggests that we consider the existence of a trope called "literalization,"[81] which would be treating categories as rigid and narrow. If the production of meaning in a writerly text the task of the reader, then the failure to produce it is also the fault of reader. Lack of meaning is there for those who would look for it.

Similar to Saussy, Empson had also pointed to the permeable boundary between literal and figurative when it is illuminated by a second language:

> It is odd to consider that what is a double meaning in one language is often only a compactness of phrasing in another; that in the sophisticated tongues of many savage tribes you cannot say: 'Bring me my gun, the dogs, and three beaters'—using the same verb, and the same inflexion of it, for three such different actions—without being laughed at as a man who has made a bad pun.[82]

There is a dimension to this problem which necessarily implicates translation, as obscure

80 Saussy 45.

81 Ibid. 42.

82 Empson 70.

language straddles the border of a language or literary tradition; perhaps it is no accident that Zhang Ming, in the beginning of this chapter, said that Du Yunxie's poem seemed like it had been written in a foreign language. Throughout this discussion, we have confronted again and again attempts at drawing analogies between the Chinese and Western traditions, attempts whose success or failure is always in question, and which illuminate the instability of the category of literary obscurity, of *menglong*. Whether or not one considers Li Jinfa's poetry "Symbolist" seems to depend largely on one's opinion of Symbolism, but it is equally possible and equally difficult to ask if Wang Wei's poetry is Symbolist. Is obscurity/*menglong* something that exists in one literary tradition, or in all of them? Can the obscure/*menglong* tendencies of modern Chinese poets—Li Jinfa, the Taiwanese Modernist poets, the Mainland Menglong poets—be explained as mere imitations of Western literary movements, movements either understood poorly by their Chinese practitioners or which could not survive in China or Taiwan, without the necessary social/economic preconditions? If a source text is itself obscure/*menglong*, if its meaning is not stable or if what it conveys is not paraphrasable in language, how would one translate it? How would you know if two texts produce a similar lack of sense in their respective languages? We can see how *menglong* language is rejected as Chinese's "other," something that is both part of the language and outside it.

Chapter 3
Musicality

Zhu Guangqian and the Rhythm of New Poetry

"Sound is an arbitrary carrier of structure."
Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*

"What has sound got to do with music?"
Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata*

The Music of Modernity

What is the nature of rhythm as it pertains to poetry? Is it an objective fact, an observable structure composed of alternating distinctive features—of stress, of pitch, of duration? Or is it a subjective perception, a listener's (or reader's) response to the overall organization of all the elements of the poem, including sounds, meanings, and associations? On the one hand, the sonic aspect of a poem may simply mark it as a poem, or as a certain kind of poem, and thus introduce certain conventional expectations into dialog with the semantic content of the poem. On the other hand, the sound of poetry may seem to mean something much more concrete, if not exactly paraphrasable. Sound, it seems, is more than arbitrary but less than sense-making, and for many poets and readers in twentieth century China, musicality is central to the experience of reading and writing poetry. Discussing the "musicality" of poetry is one way to prevent poetic form's reduction to the status of an incidental ornamentation of meaning, or an auxiliary reinforcement of that meaning.[1]

1 Although I will use the terms "rhythm" and "musicality" more or less interchangeably, they are not the same thing, even in the restricted context of poetry. However, in the aesthetic theories of Zhu Guangqian and

The early conversations on the form of New Poetry are full of intriguing provocations comparing poetry to music. When Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (1899-1946) listed "musical beauty" 音樂的美 as one of the three aesthetic categories that New Poetry should strive to attain, he was advocating the use of regular meter—a practice that had fallen out of favor during the 1920s, reminiscent as it was of the poetic practice of the Chinese past. Yet even those poets who rejected the use of meter in their poetry spoke of poetry's musicality and the importance of rhythm. In a letter dated March 30, 1920, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978) wrote to Zong Baihua 宗白華 (1897-1986) from Japan:

> We're on the train now! We're going to Dazaifu. Dazaifu is still far from here. It's probably ten miles from Hakata station to Futsukaichi, and another two miles of countryside from Fustukaichi to Dazaifu. The weather is fine today, the train is rushing over the verdant fields like an intrepid, determined youth, striving towards a hopeful future. Fly! fly! All of life's brilliant green glow is dancing before our eyes. Fly! fly! fly! My self is dissolved into this limitless rhythm. I am completely unified with this train, with Great Nature. Against the window, I gaze at Nature, twirling and dancing, I listen to the *tan-ta* processional of the train's wheels, I am ecstatic! ecstatic!
>
> 我們現在正在火車當中呀！我們是要往太宰府去的。太宰府離此處還遠，由博多驛車行至二日市，可十英里。由二日市至太宰府尚有二英里的光景。今日天氣甚好，火車在青翠的田疇中急行，好像個勇猛忱毅的少年向著希望瀰滿的前途努力奮邁的一般。飛！飛！一切青翠的生命燦爛的光波在我們眼前飛舞。飛！飛！飛！我的"自我"融化在這個磅礴雄渾的 Rhythm 中去了！我同火車全體，大自然全體，完全合而為一了！我憑著車窗望著旋回飛舞的自然，聽著車輪鞚韃的進行調，痛快！痛快！[2]

Guo's use of the English word "rhythm" calls attention to its special status in his poetic thought of the time: in this letter, rhythm unites man, machine, and nature in one moment

Theodor Lipps discussed below, rhythm is such a central element of poetry's musicality, and of music as such, that I will allow them to stand in for each other.

2 Huang Chunhao 黃淳浩, ed., *Guo Moruo shuxin ji shang* 郭沫若書信集上 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1992) 117. The word "rhythm" appears in English in the original.

of aesthetic ecstasy. Even Guo's prose begins to mimic the train's insistent rhythmic repetition as his excitement for the rush of the scenery and the rhythm of the train grows: "Fly! fly! fly!" Despite rejecting the use of regular meter in his early works, Guo still wrote of rhythm as an essential part of poetry; however, he advocates, in his own English phrase, "intrinsic rhythm" (*neizai yunlü* 內在韻律) or "formless rhythm" (*wuxing yunlü* 無形韻律), as opposed to *waizai yunlü* 外在韻律—which Guo translates into English not as "external rhythm" but, revealingly, "extraneous [sic] rhythm." How can rhythm be "formless," when our intuition tells us rhythm is precisely "formal" in nature? Guo specifically rules out any of the likely definitions of the term: intrinsic rhythm, he says, "is not any '*ping shang qu ru*' [the four tones of classical Chinese verse], 'high low rising falling,' or '*gong shang zhi yu*' [four notes of the traditional Chinese musical scale]; nor is it any two-syllable rhymes or rhymes stuck in the middle of sentences!" 並不是什麼平上去入，高下抑揚，強弱長短，宮商徵羽；也並不是什麼雙聲疊韻，什麼押在句中的韻文.[3] These familiar categories of poetic or musical form are all "extraneous"—Guo's version of poetic rhythm is something that necessarily eludes the grasp of any but the most superior readers and poets but which is nonetheless essential to true poetry. It is "the natural ebbs and flows of the emotions" 內在的韻律便是 '情緒的自然消漲' ; it "addresses itself to the heart and not to the ear" 訴諸心而不訴諸耳.[4] Such an ineffable quality requires a special kind of reader/listener: "This kind

3 Ibid. 51.

4 Ibid.

of rhythm is extremely subtle; anyone who hasn't attained poetry's inner sanctum simply cannot understand it" 這種韻律異常微妙，不曾達到詩的堂奧的人簡直不會懂.[5] This remark predicts a similar one from almost forty years later, by Ji Xian 紀弦 (1913-2013), writing in Taiwan: "All old poetry of the past was addressed to the fleshly ears and fleshly eyes. Modern poetry is different: it is addressed to the mind's ear and the mind's eye—no! it is addressed to the entire spirit" 過去一切舊詩是訴諸肉耳與肉眼的。但是現代詩則否：它是訴諸心耳與心眼的——不！它是訴諸全心靈的.[6] Both poets are obviously concerned with differentiating their poetic practice from an essentialized "old" poetry, and both poets do so by rejecting physical, or formal, constraints; they both even use the same verbal compound, *su zhu* 訴諸 "speaking to" (which I have translated "addressed to") as they propose the existence of sensory organs other than those limited to the physical world.

Differentiating new from old for Guo Moruo and Ji Xian means moving from the plane of the physical to the plane of the spiritual, and thus from the superficial to the essential; at the same time, it requires a reader of specially heightened aesthetic sensitivity. Just as Guo Moruo demands a reader who has "entered poetry's inner sanctum," Ji Xian says that it is no great honor for a poet to be understood by every "old crone" *laoyu* 老嫗 (as Bai Juyi's 白居易 poems were said to be)—that "just like Boya had Zhong Ziqi to listen to him

5 Ibid. 52.

6 Ji Xian, "Xiandai shi de chuangzuo yu xinshang" 現代詩的創作與欣賞 in *Ziyou qingnian* 自由青年 22.3 (1 Aug. 1959) 8-9.

when he played the *qin*, [having one sympathetic listener] is enough" 正如伯牙鼓琴，而有鍾子期的傾聽，這就夠了.[7] What Guo Moruo characterizes in poetry's "musicality" is not its formal structure, but rather a dream of unmediated communication, not constrained by cultural or historical determinants. Guo's version of Romanticism is fixated on intrinsic, transcendent essences, and it cannot tolerate craft that operates merely on the surface, on the ear instead of the heart. Poetry, to Guo, "just needs to be a truly beautiful woman; it doesn't matter what she's wearing. And if she's not wearing anything, all the better!" 只要是真正的美人穿件什麼衣裳都好，不穿衣裳的裸體更好![8] In Guo's poetics, free verse and its "intrinsic rhythm" represent the absence of external constraint and therefore promise freedom for the individual—the "freedom" (*ziyou* 自由) of "free" verse (*ziyoushi* 自由詩)—and the possibility of direct, unmediated expression between the poet and the right reader. If we are not already Zhong Ziqi, the ideal listener, we can't understand Guo Moruo's music: the musical is that which creates the appearance of intuitiveness. In this kind of poetical thought, if musicality is a quality of poetic language, then it is exactly that quality that makes language beautiful while concealing its own cultural or historical mediation, that appeals to

7 Ibid. The story of Boya and Zhong Ziqi is recorded in the *Lüshi chunqiu*: when Boya played the *qin*, Zhong Ziqi could understand intuitively Boya's state of mind purely by listening to the music. For instance, when Boya thought of Mt. Tai as he played, Ziqi exclaimed, "How marvelous is your playing! Grand and majestic, like Mt. Tai!" Specifically, the text states that Boya's *zhi* 志—his attention (or intention), his imagination—was set on Mt. Tai. According to the old formula from the *Shang shu*, that kind of intention, *zhi*, is exactly what is given expression in poetry.

8 "Lun shi san zha" 論詩三札 in Yang Kuanghan and Liu Fuchun, eds., *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中國現代詩論 (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1991) 53.

the intuition rather than the intellect.[9]

Despite Guo Moruo's ideological investments, his insistence on a quality of poetic beauty that is neither dependent on its content (or meaning, or message) nor surface formal features, but whose appreciation is at least partly based on intuition and whose basis is difficult to analyze, is a powerful provocation. We can find other discussions of literary musicality that point toward the same possibility. For instance, contemporary American composer Alan Shockley has studied Modernist novels in terms of Heinrich Schenker's *Ursatz* (the "deep structure" that underlies Western tonal music):

> Certainly such basic techniques of poetic analysis as scansion, the labeling of rhyme scheme, the search for assonance and consonance, are all methods of locating and analyzing the musical elements within a poetic text. These are also, usually, the labeling of local-level events: they are, in Schenkerian terms, techniques for dealing with the *Vordergrund*, or foreground. There is also something to be gained, something to be learned from applying a knowledge of larger-scale musical devices, compositional techniques, strategies for musical development, formal structures—perhaps even the idea of a generative and multi-leveled structure—to an essentially non-musical text.[10]

Shockley's suggestion is that the rhythm of the written word can appear not only on the surface, in metrical or rhyming effects, but also on a level not immediately apparent to the reader's sensory perception. Shockley reminds us that "musical" does not merely mean "repetitive"—musical patterns may be produced through a great many operations besides

9 For a similarly "mystical" effusion about music, both "audible" and "inaudible," see Xu Zhimo's translation of Baudelaire's "Une charogne,""Si shi" 死尸 in *Yu si* 語絲 3 (1 Dec. 1924): 5–~~7~~, as well as Haun Saussy's discussion "Death and Translation" in *Representations* 94.1 (Spring 2006): 112-130. Also see Lu Xun's sarcastic response "'Yinyue'?" 音樂 in *Yu si* 5 (15 Dec. 1924), where he ridicules Xu's translation as well as the idea of a specially-attuned listener/reader.

10 Alan Shockley, *Music in the Words: Musical Form and Counterpoint in the Twentieth Century Novel* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2009) 2.

repetition. This is why Ezra Pound was able to describe Imagist free verse practice in opposition to regularity, while still emphasizing its musicality: "As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome."[11] A satisfying theory of musicality as it pertains to modern Chinese poetic practice would account for deep structure, not just surface structure; it would address historical change, rather than positing transhistorical universals or arbitrarily dividing time into "modern" and past. Philosopher Zhu Guangqian's 朱光潛 (1896-1986) aesthetic theory provides just such an approach to poetry, and it forms an under-appreciated contribution to the discussion on the possibilities of New Poetry.

Zhu Guangqian may be an unusual figure to address in a discussion of modern Chinese New Poetry, since he was generally unimpressed by such poetry, and since his critiques of new poetry's vices (its immaturity, formal sloppiness, lack of depth, insufficient nativization, etc.) very much mirror those of other detractors through the years. Though he wrote articles praising the poetry of Dai Wangshu 戴望舒 (1905-1950), Fei Ming 廢名 (1901-1967), and Feng Zhi 馮至 (1905-1993),[12] and published poems by them and others in the magazine *Literature* 文學雜誌, his 1956 article "What Can Modern Poetry Learn from Classical Poetry?" 新詩從舊詩能學習的些什麼？[13] more than balances the positive

11 Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect," in T.S. Eliot, ed., *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1968) 3.

12 Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2001): 185-186.

13 "Xinshi cong jiushi neng xuexi de xie sheme?" in *Guangming ribao* (November 24, 1956). An English translation appears in Hualing Nieh, *Literature of the Hundred Flowers* (New York: Columbia UP, 1981), pp.

things he had to say.

> My guess is that many modern poems do not appeal to readers precisely because the new poets haven't learned enough about the technique of form from our rich and long tradition. They trust too much in 'natural expression,' and consequently their poems become prose divided into lines—and mediocre prose at that.
>
> 依我猜測，許多新詩之不能引人入勝，正因為我們的新詩人在運用語言的形式技巧方面，向我們的豐富悠遠的傳統裡學習的太少。他們過於信任“自然流露”，結果詩往往成為分行的散文，而且是不大高明的散文。[14]

Though Zhu's article does some injustice to the young tradition of New Poetry, for instance by comparing the absolute pinnacles of the classical tradition to the hordes of young, enthusiastic but unaccomplished new poets, Zhu touches a sore spot when he finds fault in particular with new poetry's lack of musicality—its formal unsophistication.

> Tradition is not just a question of form, but it can't fail to involve some questions of form. Poetry is language that has a sonic structure.[15] Such structure is an important element of poetry of all countries, and it is an element which is primarily formal. The poetry of any country has its own characteristic sonic forms that have been passed down through the generations. ... Sonic forms evolved as the language itself evolved. ... Those things which have survived for a long time and changed relatively little could be called the basis of the sonic structure of a country's poetry.
>
> 傳統固然不僅是形式的問題，但是也不能不同時是形式問題。詩是用有音律的語言的。音律無論在哪一國詩裡都是一個重要的成分，而同時也是一種偏於形式的成份。每一國詩都有些歷代相承的典型的音律形式…… 隨著語言的變遷，音律形式也往往隨之變遷。……這些歷代較長，變遷得較少的東西可以說是一國詩的音律的基礎。[16]

When Zhu critiques the rhythms of Chinese New Poetry, he does not do so merely on the

---

23-29.

14 Ibid.

15 The term I have translated "sonic structure," *yinlü* 音律, includes both rhythm and melody, or for poetry, meter and tonal regulation.

16 Ibid.

basis of subjective taste, but rather in terms of the most fundamental question of aesthetics, that of subject and object. Rhythmic structures, he argues, are common to a people; it is rhythm that creates the social function of poetry.[17] "With the common foundation of a sonic structure, poetry will produce the same emotions in members of a group. In other words, with the same tune [*tongdiao* 同調], people will feel the same emotions [*tonggan* 同感], and they can sympathize with each other [*tongqing* 同情]" 有了音律上的公同基礎，在感染上就會在一個集團中產生大致相同的情感上的效果。換句話説，"同調"就會"同感"，也就會"同情".[18] The physical, sonic properties of poetry are the reason for poetry's intersubjective nature; in fact, a common reaction to a melody is the basis for sympathy.[19] If our definition of "musicality" in poetry has been that aspect of poetry that conceals its mediatedness by appearing to be intuitive, in this case, Zhu has elided the historical axis ("those things that have lasted long and changed little") in order to emphasize the concept of a national form. The foreign-inspired meters employed since the May Fourth Era have not "taken root among the people" 在我們人民中間就沒有"根",[20] but the problem is not one of historical incidentals. Rather, the rhythms do not accord with the

17 In the phrase "social function" we can certainly detect a Marxist-Leninist cast, but the notion of a racial or ethnic basis for poetic meter is a commonplace in nineteenth and early-twentieth century prosody studies, with roots further back in Romanticism.

18 "Xinshi cong jiushi neng xuexi de xie sheme?"

19 In Zhu's discussions of rhythm, presented below, empathy creates the possibility for aesthetic experience. Here, it is the common musical language that proves the possibility for sympathy—a musical ethics. Zhu's examples of how poetry organizes and unites group—worksongs and "The East is Red"—are a nod to populism.

20 "Xinshi cong jiushi neng xuexi de xie sheme?"

natural rhythms of the speech of Chinese people.

An Aesthetics of Empathy

In his adherence to an idealist, subjective understanding of beauty, Zhu Guangqian is far to the right of much of the received canon of modern Chinese thinkers and critics—not only in the Mao era, but the late Republican period as well. Nevertheless, Zhu demonstrated again and again his willingness to investigate and revise his views through argumentation, and he did come to support certain aspects of the New Culture movement and eventually even Marxist thought.[21] A testy exchange between Zhu and Lu Xun can help us place Zhu Guangqian's aesthetics into context.[22] In an open letter to Xia Mianzun 夏丏尊 in 1935 concerning a well-known couplet by the Tang poet Qian Qi 錢起, Zhu cites the final two lines from the poem on "The Goddess of the Xiang River Playing the Zither" 湘靈鼓瑟:

> 曲終人不見，江上數峰青。
>
> The song ends and she is gone;
> The peaks above the river are green.

Zhu concludes that "the highest condition of art is not in vehemence" 藝術的最高境界都不在熱烈, but rather in "serenity" 靜穆.[23] Zhu praises Tao Qian for this quality: "Qu Yuan,

21 See, for instance, Ban Wang, *The Sublime Figure of History* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997) 157-159.

22 My thanks to Satoru Hashimoto for bringing this discussion to my attention.

23 "Shuo 'qu zhong ren bujian jiangshang shu feng qing' --da Xia Mianzun xiansheng" 說 "曲終人不見江上數峰青" --答夏丏尊先生 in *Zhu Guangqian quanji* (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987-) 8:396.

Ruan Ji, Li Bai, Du Fu—they're all a little bit like the bug-eyed guardian statues at a temple, indignant and unhappy. But Tao Qian is completely 'serene', which is what makes him great" 屈原 阮籍 李白 杜甫都不免有些像金剛怒目，憤憤不平的樣子 陶潛渾身是 "靜穆" ，所以他偉大.[24]

Lu Xun took acerbic exception to this characterization, arguing that the couplet only seems so vague and suggestive in the absence of the full poem; moreover, Zhu's aesthetics severely displeased the cranky Lu. As we might expect, the author of "The Power of *Mara* Poetry" and "Diary of a Madman" seriously disliked the idea of art produced or appreciated in "serenity." His rebuttal of Zhu's remarks comes in "Untitled Manuscript 7" 題未定草（七） from *Second Collection of Essays from Qiejie Pavilion* 且介亭雜文二集 : "Among great authors throughout history, there is not a single one who is 'completely serene.' Tao Qian is great exactly because he is *not* 'completely serene.' ... If he is revered for his 'serenity' now, it's because anthologists have cherry-picked his works in order to minimize and abuse him" '歷來偉大的作者' ，是沒有一個 '渾身是靜穆' 的 陶潛正因為並非 '渾身是靜穆' ，所以他偉大。……現在之所以往往被尊為 '靜穆' ，是因為他被選文家和摘句家所縮小，凌遲了.[25] The word that I have translated "abuse" here, *lingchi* 凌遲, is the key point in the passage. Although it can mean "abuse" or "persecute" in a figurative sense, its basic meaning is a form of public punishment in which the convict is subjected at length to a

24 Ibid.

25 Lu Xun, "Untitled Manuscript 7" 題未定草（七） in *Lu Xun quanji* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981) 6.444.

great many small cuts and amputations; typically, in a judicial sentence, *lingchi* is followed by the phrase *shizhong* 示眾, "in public view." Lu Xun's image is incredibly vivid—scholars like Zhu who insist on serenity have castrated the revolutionary potential of the arts, not just of this age but of prior ages. On the other hand, the phrasing cannot help but call to mind Lu Xun's other depictions of public execution, in "The True Story of Ah Q" 阿 Q 正傳, "A Public Execution" 示眾, and not least of all the preface to *A Call to Arms* 吶喊. In one of the foundational anecdotes of the history of modern Chinese literature, Lu Xun determined to become a writer when he saw photographs of his fellow Chinese looking on with indifference as their countryman was executed by Japanese soldiers. What disturbed Lu Xun was not the cruelty of the Japanese, but the impassivity of the Chinese viewers. His indignant defense of Tao Qian shows that he could not bear "serenity" in the face of cruelty and injustice; passive spectatorship was not merely an old-fashioned model of aesthetic experience, but a politically unacceptable one at that.

Zhu's letter to Xia Mianzun and Lu Xun's reaction date from 1935, a year before Zhu published his seminal *Psychology of Literature and Art* 文藝心理學. *Psychology of Literature and Art*, a sprawling work incorporating the aesthetics of Kant and Croce, recent German experimental psychology, and elements of Zhu's own classical Chinese education, features the concept of empathy—translated by Zhu as *yiqing zuoyong* 移情作用, "empathy-effect"—as an important element in the aesthetic experience. The discourse of empathy, or *Einfühlung*, became a major current in German aesthetics in the last quarter of the nineteenth century,

when the term was coined by Robert Vischer (1847-1933); it was the basis for the aesthetic experiments of Theodor Lipps (1851-1914) and later of the British psychologist Edward Bullough (1880-1934). According to art critic Juliet Koss, by the 1920s, *Einfühlung* had been reduced in European aesthetics to "a conceptual foil, a feminine weakness."[26] The association of empathy with femininity reached the extent that, by Zhu's time, its only notable remaining proponents were three female researchers, Vernon Lee (1856-1935), Clementina Anstruther-Thomson (1857-1921), and Husserl's student Edith Stein (1891-1942),[27] the first two of whom receive regular mention in *Psychology of Literature and Art*. Meanwhile, more "advanced" artistic elements in Europe were using *Einfühlung* as a foil for their own theories, especially Bertolt Brecht, who, after witnessing a performance by Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 in Moscow in May of 1935, penned his classic essay on "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," defining the alienation-effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) specifically against "empathy theater [*einfühlungstheater*]."[28] According to Koss, for Brecht, "The use of *Einfühlung* existed only for bourgeois entertainment: it encompassed an experience of psychological and emotional identification that encouraged spectators to lose control of their own identities and prevent[ed] the possibility of critical thought."[29] For Brecht, as for Lu Xun, an aesthetics based on empathy, here coded in passive, "serene" terms, created the necessary conditions for

26 "The Limits of Empathy" in *The Art Bulletin* v. 88, no. 1 (Mar. 2006), p. 152.

27 Ibid.

28 In *Brecht on Theater: The Development of an Aesthetic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964) 91-99.

29 Koss 152.

political fascism.[30]

But is "passive spectatorship" a fair characterization of Zhu's aesthetics? Vischer's original theory of *Einfühlung* involved, again in Koss's words, a "potentially uncomfortable destabilization of identity,"[31] one no less suggested by Zhu's characteristic formulations, "unity of self and other" *wu wo tongyi* 物我同一 and "forgetting of self and other" *wu wo liang wang* 物我兩忘. Though Zhu's work preaches Kantian disinterest, a tenant associated by Zhu with Edward Bullough's work on "psychological distance," Zhu applies the psychological theories with which he was familiar to create a model of aesthetic experience not where a constitutive subject intuits objective forms unidirectionally, but where subject and object are essentially—physically, physiologically, formally—similar, allowing them to unite in a moment of intense contemplation. In particular, Zhu develops this model of aesthetic experience with respect to rhythm, a property not only of music and poetry, but dance and even painting or architecture. The assumption that a human subject is able to empathize with abstract material forms creates the basis for Zhu's theory of rhythm in literature.

Rhythm had long been a special concern of Zhu's, and the seeds of his critique of new poetry's musicality go back to his early works of aesthetic philosophy. Our discussion below will trace Zhu's approach to poetic form through his elaboration of three key versions

30 Ironically, Lu Xun had an entirely different reaction to Mei Lanfang, the inspiration for Brecht's theory of alienation. See his essays "A Bit on Mei Lanfang et Cetera" 略論梅蘭芳及其他 and "On Photography and Things" 論照相之類.

31 Koss 152.

of the dialectic of subject and object ("the unity of self and other"): psychological distance, empathy, and finally rhythm. Zhu's untimely insertion of the national into his critique of new poetry, which we saw above, actually dramatizes a consistent ambivalence on his part between the universal and the particular, the intuitive and the mediated. Throughout Zhu's work on aesthetics, we can see a tendency to universalize apperception, through recourse to psychological or physiological factors (Nietzsche, Zhu points out, referred to aesthetics as "applied physiology"[32]). However, when confronted with efforts to ascribe stable, universal meanings to the minimally significant elements of a work of art, Zhu turns toward a kind of reading we wish to call "musical"—where all-or-nothing categories are rejected, and a work is to be treated as an organic whole with an infinite number of pertinent relations. This direction leads Zhu to posit an identity of form and content, where meaning is neither prior nor anterior to the words that express it. The result is an aesthetic theory where the differences between different cultural traditions are not absolute, due to the fundamental psychological similarity of all humans. Zhu's view of literary history thus forecloses the possibility or desirability of radical change at the same time as it opens the door for gradual transformation and a Chinese modernity based on salutary cultural contact and renovation.

Zhu Guangqian's principle works on aesthetics pre-1949—including *The Psychology of Literature and Art*, *Shi lun* 詩論, and various articles collected in the volume *On Literature* (*Tan wenxue* 談文學)—are broad and ambitious, but also seriously plagued by internal

32 *Wenyi xinlixue* in *Zhu Guangqian quan ji* (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987) 1.252.

contradictions and an overall lack of coherence. Zhu was a fervent admirer of Western science and thought, especially psychology, but also deeply trained in traditional Chinese texts. As a result, he often attempts to reconcile ideas from radically incompatible sources without fully exploring the implications of such juxtapositions, and it is often possible to find conflicting passages from different points in Zhu's work, or even within one text. Given the great number of thinkers and schools synthesized into Zhu's thought, one highly doubts the possibility of constructing a fully coherent aesthetics out of any of these works, and this discussion of Zhu's approach to poetics will necessarily remain partial and fragmentary.

Rhythm and Musical Reading

Zhu liked to remind his readers that poetry and music were not fully distinct, that music, poetry, and dance shared a common origin, an idea for which he finds evidence variously in the Greek tradition, the *Book of Odes*, and contemporary ethnographic research.[33] The three arts diverged as each developed a higher-order signifying capability: melody in music, gesture in dance, and in poetry, meaning.[34] Yet rhythm does more than just unify the performing arts; for Zhu, rhythm is the common feature that unifies the the body, the psyche, the work of art, and the natural world.

> Rhythm is a basic rule of natural phenomena in the universe. Natural phenomena cannot be always the same or always different—if they were, there would be no rhythm. Rhythm is

33 "Cong yanjiu geyao hou wo duiyu shi de xingshi wenti yijian de bianqian" 從研究歌謠後我對於詩的形式問題意見的變遷 in in *Zhu Guangqian quan ji* (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987), 8:414, *Shi lun* 7-11, 122, etc.

34 "Cong yanjiu geyao hou wo duiyu shi de xingshi wenti yijian de bianqian" 414.

> born from the succession, the intersection, the dialogue of identity and difference. The passage of winter to summer, of day to night; the replacement of old by new; the mating of male and female; the rise and fall of wind and waves; the criss-crossing of mountains by rivers; the multiplication, division, addition, and subtraction of quantities; even the contrast of positive and negative mystical principles, the historical cycles of rise and fall or prosperity and decline—all of these have a logic of rhythm within them.
>
> 節奏是宇宙中自然現象的一個基本原則。自然現象彼此不能全同，亦不能全異。全同全異不能有節奏，節奏生於同異相承續，相錯綜，相呼應。寒暑晝夜的來往，新陳的代謝，雌雄的匹偶，風波的起伏，山川的交錯，數量的乘除消長，以致於玄理方面反正的對稱，歷史方面興亡隆替的循環，都有一個節奏的道理在裡面.[35]

While this passage recalls Guo Moruo's mystical effusions about merging with the natural world, Zhu attempts through his understanding of rhythm to make serious philosophical claims about the nature of art. Zhu argues that rhythm in art arises because art imitates nature, but he is not speaking of representation—he means, rather, that each artform relies on the alternation of distinctive features (to borrow a Structuralist phrase) in time or space to produce its emotional impact. In painting, for instance, there is a "rhythmic" alternation of deep and pale colors, close and distant lines, light and dark, and so on. In time-based arts like poetry, music, and dance, it is high and low, long and short, fast and slow.[36] The subject's mind is also ordered according rhythmic cycles of respiration and circulation, tension and relaxation, attention and inattention, so the act of apprehension is an interaction of external and internal rhythms. "When we perceive external objects, it requires the fullness and concentration of our energy and attention, so we usually unconsciously seek to harmonize the rhythms of our mind and the natural world" 我們知覺外物時需要精力與注意力的飽

35 *Shi lun* 124.

36 Ibid.

滿凝聚，所以常不知不覺地希求自然界的節奏和內心的節奏相應和.[37] The interaction between these structures of alternation in the work of art and the similar structures in the subject's mind create the possibility of artistic meaning which is not linguistic or representational, but purely due to formal properties.

Yet Zhu insists that rhythm is not an objective property, either of the outside world or the internal consciousness. There is interaction in both directions: the mind takes an active role in its perception of external rhythms, such that an identical pattern perceived at different moments or by different individuals will have a different effect on the listener's mind.

> For instance, the sounds produced by the gears of a clock are uniform and monotonous on their own, without any distinctions of high and low or rising and falling. But when we hear them, we feel that some are louder or softer, longer or shorter. This is natural, because the breath and circulation rise and fall, the energy ebbs and flows, the attention focuses and dissipates, so that the same sound will seem louder when the attention is engaged and softer when the attention is lax. So as a uniform, monotonous sound continues on, the listener can still hear a patterned rhythm.
>
> 比如鐘錶機輪所作的聲響本是單調一律，沒有高低起伏，我們聽起來，卻覺得它輕重長短相間 ,這是很自然的，呼吸 ,循環有起伏，精力有張弛，注意力有緊鬆，同一聲音在注意力緊張時便顯得重，在注意力鬆懈時便顯得輕，所以單調一律的聲音繼續響下去，可以使聽者聽到有規律的節奏.[38]

In other words, the way the subject perceives external phenomena cannot be objectively corroborated; there is a purely subjective component to the perception of objective phenomena. Moving in the opposite direction, external rhythms have a clear influence over the subject's physiology and psychology, based on the psychological aesthetic principle of "inner imitation." In *Shi lun*, Zhu explains the principle as follows:

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid. 124.

> The emotional qualities of poetry and music arise from this possibility [of external rhythms influencing our internal rhythms]. Organisms are extremely good at adapting to their environment, and imitation is a very primitive instinct in animals. Seeing others laugh, we also laugh along with them; seeing others kick a ball, our own legs and feet also twitch; seeing a mountain, we unconsciously puff out our chests and lift our heads; seeing a willow sway gracefully, we unconsciously become relaxed and at ease. ... Speaking only in terms of the rhythm of a sound, there are only alternations of long and short, high and low, soft and loud, fast and slow. As these relations continually change, the mental effort expended and the mental and physical activity employed by the listener also change. So in the listener's mind, a parallelism occurs between the rhythms of the mind and the rhythm of the sound.
>
> 詩與音樂的感動性就是從這種改變的可能起來的。有機體本來最善於適應環境，而模倣又是動物的一種很原始的本能。看見旁人發笑，自己也隨之發笑；看見旁人踢球，自己的腿腳也隨之躍躍欲動；看見山時我們不知不覺地挺胸昂首；看見楊柳輕盈搖蕩時，我們也不知不覺輕鬆舒暢起來。…單就聲音的節奏來說，它是長短、高低、輕重、疾徐相繼承的關係。這些關係時時變化，聽者所費的心力和所用的身心的活動也隨之變化。因此，聽者心中自發生一種節奏和聲音的節奏相平行.[39]

Inner imitation is the topic of the fourth chapter of *Psychology of Literature and Art*, where it is also closely related to the empathic function. Both provide models of subject/object interaction which are relevant to the aesthetic experience. In moments of intense contemplation, the subject and the object fuse, such that, on the one hand, the subject's feelings or emotions are projected onto the object via empathy, but on the other hand, properties of the object are experienced by the subject via internal imitation. "We can say that the empathic function spoken of by Lipps emphasizes the direction leading from subject to object, while Groos's internal imitation emphasizes the direction from object to subject" 我們可以説，立普斯所説的‘移情作用’偏重由我及物的一方面，谷魯斯所説的‘內模仿’偏重由物及我的一方面.[40] Zhu does not see a distinction between feeling the urge to laugh upon seeing others laugh and imagining that a willow tree is "relaxed and at

39 Ibid. 125.

40 *Wenyi xinlixue* 257.

ease" upon seeing it sway, and then feeling that emotion oneself; the difference between representing and being is not relevant, perhaps since both are produced in the mind of the subject. Thus Zhu is able to account for the aesthetic apprehension of formal relationships in terms of empathy:

> We don't know what a mouse feels like when it is chased by a cat, but we remember when we were ourselves placed in a perilous situation; we don't know the difference between a line standing straight up or lying on its side, but we remember the distinction between times when we were standing up or lying down. Measuring the world on the basis of ourselves, we can imagine the terror of a mouse chased by a cat, and in the same way, we can imagine that when a line is standing up straight it is as tense as we are when we stand up, when it lies on its side it is as relaxed and at ease as we are when we are reclining. This is the same reason we feel that a stone pillar surges up, resisting with all its might.
>
> 我們不知道鼠被貓追捕時的情感，但是記得起自己處危境的恐懼；我們不知道一條線在直立着和橫排着的時候有什麼不同，但是記得起自己在站着和臥着時的分別。以己測物，我們想像到想像到鼠被追的恐懼；同理，我們也想像線在直立時和我們站着時一樣緊張，在橫排時和我們臥着時一樣弛懈安閒。我們覺得石柱聳立上騰，出力抵抗，也是因為這個道理.[41]

We attribute meaning to a formal abstraction such as a vertical or horizontal line in architecture or painting based on the same principle that allows us to know that a mouse is afraid. Zhu differs from detractors who maintain that we cannot empathize with inanimate things by arguing that anyone familiar with contemporary experimental art would know that "all things, including colors and lines, can produce empathic effects" 一切事物，連顏色、線形等等在內，都可以起移情作用.[42]

What, then, accounts for the pleasure derived from music, poetry, or other rhythmic phenomena? Zhu has already touched upon the answer: the subject seeks a kind of

41 Ibid. 244.

42 Ibid. 248.

correspondence between his internal, physiological rhythms and the external rhythms he perceives. Zhu develops the concepts of consonance and dissonance (*xie* 諧 and *ao* 拗) to explain this relationship.[43]

> The ideal rhythm must meet the natural requirements of [the listener's] physiology and psychology. That is, it must accord with the limits of muscle tension, the cycles of rise and fall in attention, and the expectation of satisfaction and surprise. The distinction between what I call "consonant" and "dissonant" arises from this criterion. If the rhythm of changes in the state of things is parallel and consistent with the internal rhythm of the mind and body so the psyche can avoid performing any unnatural effort, and one feels pleased, then this is consonant. Otherwise it is dissonant.
>
> 理想的節奏須能適合生理、心理的自然需要，這就是說，適合於筋肉張弛的限度，注意力鬆緊的起伏回環，以及預期所應有的滿足與驚訝，所謂"諧"和"拗"的分別就是從這個條件起來的。如果物態的起伏節奏與身心內在的節奏相平行一致，則心理方面可以免去不自然的努力，感覺得愉快，就是"諧"，否則便是"拗".[44]

Though the consonance/dissonance binary is slightly crude on its own, it can explain much more complex qualitative effects in an actual piece of music. Zhu's most important source on the subject of rhythm appears to be Theodore Lipps, whose *Consonance and Dissonance in Music* explains the perceptual phenomena of consonance and dissonance in terms of "tone-rhythm," that is, the rhythm of vibrations in a given period of time, rather than frequency ratios.[45] What is notable about Lipps's theory of consonance is that he adopts

43 These translations are based on a mixed metaphor that may invite confusion. "Consonant" and "dissonant" refer most commonly to harmony (combinations of pitches), rather than rhythm, and are rendered in Chinese *hexie yin* 和諧音 and *bu hexie yin* 不和諧音. Musicologists do speak of rhythmic or metrical dissonance, and the concepts are related: harmonic dissonance involves the non-alignment of the vibrations that produce pitch; in rhythmic dissonance, the non-alignment takes place on the larger scale of rhythm. See Thomas Street Christensen, *The Cambridge History of Western Music* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 708.

44 *Shi lun* 126-7.

45 Lipps does not contest that the perception of pitch and consonance depends on the mathematical ratio of frequencies in the vibrations of physical media, but he employs the notion of tone-rhythm to help explain the fact that consonance and dissonance are phenomena of the consciousness, while the ratio of frequencies

the terminology of rhythm to explain perceptual phenomena not ordinarily described in those terms, so that the principles of consonance and dissonance are scalable to different types of musical structures. "The single compound tone represents in a certain sense the larger musical whole. It's a rhythmic system built up from a fundamental rhythm. This rhythm is more or less richly differentiated in the rhythm of each of its pitches. Every musical whole also is such a rhythmic system, whether presented in a moment or projected over time."[46]

Thus the definition of rhythm adopted by Zhu has great potential explanatory power for musical aesthetics as a whole. For one thing, like rhythm, pitch is also the perceived effect of events happening regularly in time (vibrations of faster or slower frequency) which may, when they occur simultaneously or in sequence, seem more or less dissonant, depending on the regularity with which the waveforms overlap. Each interval is a unique ratio of frequencies, and therefore occupies a unique place on the spectrum of dissonance; each harmony or chord is thus also a unique mathematical relationship of frequencies, so we have a clear basis for discussing tension and resolution. Further qualities of expression (crescendo and decrescendo, tremolo or vibrato, phrasing, changes in tempo) or timbre could similarly be imagined as changes over time ("dynamics")—for Zhu Guangqian, these would also be rhythmic. Even the large structure of a piece of music, which generally involves repetitions

occurs in the physical world. See Theodor Lipps, *Consonance and Dissonance in Music*, trans. William Thomson (San Marino, California: Everett Books, 1995).

46 Lipps 93.

and variations, antecedent and consequent phrases or passages, fulfills Zhu's basic definition of rhythm. If the emotional effects of these various rhythmic configurations on the psyche could be known, the subjective emotional content of a piece of music could, in fact, be predicted simply from a knowledge of the abstract structures of the piece—at least, within the limits of variation among different subjective perceptions of rhythm.

Zhu suggests as much, though without being so bold as to assign specific meanings to specific musical features. "When the emotions stir, various functions of the circulatory system are disturbed; the tensing of muscles and focus of the attention change from their usual states, and their rhythms, which had also been as usual, change along with them. In other words, each emotion has its special rhythm" 情緒一發動，呼吸、循環種種作用受擾動，筋肉的伸縮和注意力的張弛就突然改變常態，原來常態的節奏自然亦隨之改變。換句話説，每種情緒都有它的特殊節奏.[47] For comparison, Zhu provides a famous passage from the *Record of Music* 樂記, comparing it in passing to Schopenhauer's "objectification of will":

> When the mind is moved to sorrow, the sound is sharp and fading away; when it is moved to pleasure, the sound is slow and gentle; when it is moved to joy, the sound is exclamatory and soon disappears; when it is moved to anger, the sound is coarse and fierce; when it is moved to reverence, the sound is straightforward, with an indication of humility; when it is moved to love, the sound is harmonious and soft. These six [kinds of sound] are not this way by their natures; the sounds must be perceived before the feelings are produced.
>
> 其哀心感者其聲噍以殺，其樂心感者其聲嘽以緩，其喜心感者其聲發以散，其怒心感者其聲粗以厲，其敬心感者其聲直以廉，其愛心感者其聲和以柔。六者非性也，感於物而後動。[48]

47 *Shi lun* 129.

48 Quoted in ibid. 128; the translation is based on Legge's. Zhu also mentions this passage in connection with

Yet how to define these rhythms and the emotions that relate to them is no easy task. Zhu mentions the ancient Greeks' association of the various keys to emotional qualities—e.g. the key of B is mournful, the key of F is lascivious, etc.—but says these associations would need to be verified experimentally.[49] In *Psychology of Literature and Art*, Zhu reproduces the results of studies by a certain E. Power, who assigned emotional descriptions to some of the common major and minor keys:[50]

> C major: a mood of pure determination; purity, resolution, steadfastness, religious fervor.
> G major: sincere faith, quiet love, a pastoral flavor; carries a certain playfulness, most beloved by young people.
> G minor: at times sorrowful, at times jubilant.
> A major: confidence, hope, pleasantness, best suited for expressing sincere feeling.
> A minor: feminine gentleness; the pain and reverence of Scandinavian peoples.
> B major: seldom used, but extremely clear and bright; expresses bravery, spirit, pride.
> B minor: very mournful, expresses tranquil expectation.
> F-sharp major: extremely bright, gentle, full.
> F-sharp minor: secrecy, mystery, enthusiasm.
> A-flat major: the feeling of being in a dream.
> F major: pleasantness but with a touch of regret; suitable for expressing religious feeling.
> F minor: grief.
>
> C 陽調　純粹堅決的情調，純潔，果斷，沈毅，宗教熱。
> G 陽調　真摯的信仰，平靜的愛情，田園風味，帶有若干諧趣，為少年所最愛聽。
> G 陰調　有時憂愁，有時欣喜。
> A 陽調　自信，希望，和悅，最能表現真摯的情感。
> A 陰調　女子的柔情，北歐民族的傷感和虔敬心。
> B 陽調　用時甚少，極瞭亮，表現勇敢豪爽驕傲。
> B 陰調　調甚悲哀，表現恬靜的期望。
> F 提高陽調　極瞭亮，柔和，豐富。

Schopenhauer in *Psychology of Literature and Art* 301.

49 *Shi lun* 129.

50 Zhu does not explain whether the qualities given were determined through the prompting of experimental subjects or just through Power's subjective evaluations. I have not yet been able to determine Power's identity.

F 提高陰調　陰沈，神祕，熱情。
A 降低陽調　夢境的情感。
F 陽調　和悅，微帶悔悼，宜於表現宗教的情感。
F 陰調　悲愁.[51]

This kind of exercise may be familiar to musical practitioners, even those who lack perfect pitch; it is common to look for some absolute points of reference in an otherwise symmetrical and transposable system. The fact that some plausible descriptions ("feminine gentleness") appear alongside much more specific ones ("the pain and reverence of Scandinavian peoples") suggests the difficulty of this kind of research. Zhu further refers to an Italian study cited by Max Schoen (1888-1959) which deals with relative values, the intervals between pairs of notes.[52]

Minor second: melancholy, mourning, resignation, anxiety, worry.
Major second: somewhat cheerier than the minor second, but still with a serious air.
Minor third: melancholy, bitterness, restlessness; some feel that it expresses tranquility, contentment, and religious fervor.
Major third: joy, color, bravery, resolution, confidence, glory.
Fourth: fullness, joy, color, strength, glory, but with sadness mixed in.
Fifth: responses are many, but usually tranquility and joy, with sadness mixed in.
Sixth:[53] peace, strength, bravery, victory.
Minor sixth: usually serenity.
Major sixth: usually expresses contentment, tenderness, and hope, with sadness mixed in.
Seventh: restlessness, discontent, surprise, illusion.
Minor seventh: discord, worry.
Major seventh: discord, worry, though perhaps with some hope or faith.
Octave: perfection, achievement, perhaps with welcome, anxiety, or mourning.

51 *Wenyi xinlixue* 507.

52 For an overview of Schoen and his work on the aesthetics and psychology of music, see William R. Lee, "Max Schoen and His Work in Music" in *The Bulletin of Historical Research in Music Education*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Jan., 1997), pp. 85-105.

53 It seems that the entries for "sixth" and "seventh" are meant to apply to both the minor and major qualities of the interval. The dissonant "tritone" or diminished fifth is missing from the table.

短二階 悲傷，痛悼，退讓，焦躁，疑慮。
長二階 較短二階稍愉快，仍帶嚴肅氣。
短三階 悲傷，愁苦，騷動，有人以為它表示平靜，滿意，及宗教熱。
長三階 欣喜，顏色，勇敢，果決，自信，發揚。
四階　　滿足，欣喜，顏色，力量，發揚，間帶傷感。
五階　　反應甚多，通常為平靜，欣喜，間帶傷感。
六階　　和悅，力量，勇敢，勝利。
短六階 通常是靜穆。
長六階 通常表示滿意，柔情，希望，間帶傷感。
七階　　騷動，不滿意，驚訝，幻覺。
短七階 不和諧，疑慮。
長七階 不和諧，疑慮，間或表示希望，信仰。
八階　　完美，成就，間或表現招邀，焦躁，或哀悼.[54]

Once again we see the difficulty: the same or similar descriptive terms apply to intervals which sound nothing alike, while calling upon us to imagine a sound that is "tender" and "hopeful" but "with sadness mixed in" suggests that these linguistic descriptions may not, in fact, capture the feeling of music adequately. This rudimentary effort to define the qualities of the different intervals appears to be a forerunner of Deryck Cook's notorious *The Language of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), which provides a lexicon of musical motifs translated into linguistic descriptions, but which relies on ahistorical, naturalistic bases for its interpretations.

In all these cases, an effort has been made to find the minimally significant elements of music, by analogy to the morpheme in modern linguistics. Zhu, however, rejects this method on principle.

> As we see from [Power's] table, although each interval produces a distinct impression, they have no fixed standard. The second and seventh are dissonant intervals, so their impression is very clear, but the others, like the fifth, fourth, or major third, produce very imprecise

54 *Wenyi xinlixue* 508-9.

> impressions. The impressions produced by music should be studied with respect to the whole work.
>
> 從這個表看，音階雖各有特殊的影響，而卻沒有定準。二階七階本來是兩種嘈雜的音階（dissonances），所以影響很明顯，其餘如五階，四階，長三階等所生的影響並不確定。音樂的影響應從整個樂調研究.[55]

Zhu's dissatisfaction with the study stems from his refusal to adopt an analytical approach with respect to the work of art. On the one hand, we could interpret this tendency as a characteristically Beijing School respect for the integrity of the work of art and insistence to treat it only as a whole; Fang Bao, of the Tongcheng School, similarly refused to excerpt longer works for his prose anthologies because they were "complete in themselves, with a beginning and an end; they cannot be cut up and divided."[56] On the other hand, though, Zhu is consistently concerned with the continuous, rather than discrete, qualities of art; he justifies this bias by pointing out that no relation (melodic interval, difference in linguistic stress, etc.) exists in isolation, and that the context that determines its meaning is highly complex. Put this way, Zhu sounds more like twentieth century musicologist Célestin Deliège, who asserts that meaning in the musical work is produced by countless interrelations: "To define the meaning of a musical work is an insurmountable task: *every relation is pertinent* and the possible number is probably infinite."[57] Though there are times when Zhu's approach to the study of poetry seems woefully insufficient to cope with

55 Ibid. 509.

56 See Theodor Huters, "From Writing to Literature: The Development of Late Qing Theories of Prose" in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.1 (Jun. 1987), 69.

57 Quoted in Raymond Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood, 1992) 14.

linguistic phenomena which are, by now, well understood, his apparent blindness to the Structuralist concepts of distinctive features or pertinence, concepts which he himself frequently gestures towards, is simultaneously what allows him to treat poetry less as language and more as something approaching music.

A case in point is Zhu's discussion of "tone" in poetry in chapter eight of *Shi lun*. In this chapter and the two that follow, Zhu attempts to describe the qualities that produce meter in Chinese: by analogy to Western classical meters, he discusses length (quantity); by analogy to meters in Germanic languages, he discusses stress; and based on his understanding of traditional Chinese meters, he discusses tone. Tone (*sheng* 聲), "the distinctive pitch level of a syllable,"[58] has been a pertinent category of Chinese versification since at least the Six Dynasties period, when Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513) identified four tonal categories and argued for their importance to poetry.[59] We can know which of the four middle Chinese tonal categories (*ping* 平 "level", *shang* 上 "rising", *qu* 去 "departing", *ru* 入 "entering") words belonged to historically, and their tones in the modern Chinese languages have evolved predictably from those categories; however, the actual pitches and contours of Chinese words read aloud seem to have varied widely from time to time and place to place. Though the names of the tones ("level" and "rising") seem to provide some hints to how they sounded, at least at one time and place, they are not exactly satisfying descriptions ("departing",

58 David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991).

59 Even earlier than Shen Yue, rhyming syllables consistently belong to the same tonal category, but Shen represents the earliest awareness of tone as a property of Chinese.

"entering"). Zhu cites some qualitative descriptions of the tones in an attempt to understand their phonological differences. From the ninth-century *Yuanhe Rhyme Scheme* 元和韻譜,

> The level tone rests sorrowfully; the rising tone lifts fiercely; the departing tone goes off distinctly; the entering tone hurries on directly.
>
> 平聲者哀而安，上聲者厲而舉，去聲者清而遠，入聲者直而促.[60]

Such a description is remarkably similar to the passage Zhu has cited from the *Record of Music* and is quite possibly based on that passage; several of the same words appear in both ("sorrowful" 哀, "fierce" 厲, "straightforward"/"direct" 直). Although Zhu is ostensibly investigating the actual phonetic properties of the four tones, we have no trouble seeing the implications: tone, in poetry as in music, is a formal property which creates an emotional reaction in its listener.

The flaw in Zhu's analysis is that he fails to address the pertinence of the qualities at hand, so he will, for instance, discuss the length of syllables in a soliloquy from *Hamlet* even after he has noted that English meters are based on stress. Scanning the line, "To be or not to be: that is the question," Zhu says it "uses iambic [*qingzhong* 輕重, literally "unstressed stressed"] pentameter with an extra syllable in the fifth foot. The stressed syllables in the first and third foot are also long syllables, and thus are read as longer than the second and fourth feet, but English verse does not fully count the distinction between long and short" 是用輕重五步格，第五步多一音，第一步 、第三步的重音同時是長音，在讀時比第二 、第四

60 Quoted in *Shi lun* 162.

音兩音步都較長，但英文詩並不十分計較這種長短的分別.[61] If stress is the basis for division into feet, then length should not enter into the discussion; modern linguistics would not recognize a qualification like "not fully." Zhu makes the same error in his discussion of tone in Chinese, where he attempts to discuss the qualities of duration and stress proper to the four tones of Chinese, even after he has cited works by Liu Fu 劉復 (1891-1934) and Zhao Yuanren 趙元任 (1892-1982) which demonstrate that the tones are distinguished on the basis of pitch contours, and even after he himself has warned that he actual values of the tones differ widely over time and geographical space. We are certainly not surprised to see a Chinese intellectual of this period importing categories (such as stress and length) from Western languages into a discussion of Chinese, but Zhu's most eccentric moment comes when he goes in the opposite direction.

> Most people think that the four tones are a phenomenon of Chinese languages, but this view is not completely correct. For instance, English vowels when long are rising tone; long e, i, o, and u are departing tone; short e, i, and u are entering tone. No vowel is level tone on its own, but when it is put with nasals (w, n),[62] if it is not a stressed syllable, it frequently becomes dark level.[63] For instance, the 'phen' in Stephen, the 'don' in London, or the 'tom' in phantom.
>
> 一般人以為四聲是中國語言的特殊現象。這種見解不完全是對的。比如説英文母音，長音就是上聲，e、i、o、u長音都是去聲，e、i、u短音都是入聲。獨立的母音沒有平聲，但是母音與鼻音(w、n)相拼時，如果不是重音，往往讀成陰平，例如 stephen 之 phen

61 *Shi lun* 157.

62 No actual phonetic value of 'w' is nasal (*biyin* 鼻音). Perhaps he is searching for a way to describe those sounds which are not obstruents (in which the airflow is obstructed) but which are also not full vowels (which are syllabic).

63 In many Chinese dialects, one or more of the tones of Middle Chinese have split in two, the "dark" *yin* 陰 and "bright" *yang* 陽; those syllables beginning with unvoiced consonants are "dark" while those beginning with voiced consonants or vowels are "bright."

音，london 之 don 音，phantom 之 tom 音.[64]

On the surface, this is a laughably misguided passage. The word phantom does not change in any lexically or grammatically significant way if its second syllable is read in level tone, rising tone, departing tone, or any other tone, nor would a scansion of existing English verse in terms of Chinese tones yield any meaningful pattern.[65] The categories Zhu has attempted to import are simply not pertinent. Even if *Shi lun* predates the Chomskian distinction between deep and surface structure, a common-sense familiarity with English poetry would have led most researchers to reject a discussion of tone out of hand. Yet let us remember Deliège's assertion: in music, *every relation is pertinent*. If one were attempting to describe an utterance as accurately as possible, he would not need to distinguish between surface features and deep structures—to describe objectively the way a recitation of Hamlet's soliloquy sounds would necessarily be to include questions of pitch, tempo, and volume that do not ordinarily enter into discussions of linguistic or metrical structure—i.e. to produce an *etic* rather than an *emic* description, the way a phonograph would, rather than a musical score. The implications of what we might call "musical reading" is nothing less than a rejection of all-or-nothing categories.

64 Ibid. 167.

65 A similarly surprising superimposition of Chinese categories onto English literature comes from Zhu's brief history of regulated verse in chapters eleven and twelve of *Shi lun* (discussed more in the conclusion): "Western poets, as a rule, enjoy embellishment more than Chinese poets. Many of their mid-length poems are really just *fu* [賦]"—a genre of Chinese writing translated as rhapsody, rhymeprose, or poetic exposition. "Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,' Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Il Penseroso*, Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind,' Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale,' and Hugo's 'Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne' and 'L'expiation' (*Shi lun* 194).

This rejection of all-or-nothing categories is anticipated in Zhu's critique of Crocean aesthetics in chapter eleven of the 1936 version of *Psychology of Literature and Art*, a chapter he added to the original during his time lecturing at Tsinghua. In critiquing Croce on the basis of value (which, in art, means beauty), Zhu rejects the claims that all art is absolutely beautiful and that only the beautiful can be art, claims which result, Zhu says, in an equation of the terms perception, expression, creation, appreciation, art, and beauty.[66] For Zhu, art is to be measured by a single criterion, that its form reflect its content. This yoking of form and content, however, is not the simple subordination of form to content that we find in May Fourth poetics, where the cliché that "form must reflect content" is repeated again and again. Zhu explains the relationship of form and content as follows: "The highest ideal for art is that its matter (feeling or content) be manifested in its words (images or form) in the most appropriate way. But in reality, there is art whose matter overflows from its words, and art whose words are richer than its matter" 藝術的最高理想自然是情（即情趣或內容）見（即表現）於詞（即意象或形式），恰到好處。但是實際上有情趣溢於詞的，也有詞富於情的.[67] For Zhu, these three possibilities align with Hegel's Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic ages: in the first, form outstrips content, and in the last, content transcends form. Zhu says Croce implies that only the Classical is true art, while Zhu wishes to establish a basis for judgment that could compare different works of art qualitatively.

Zhu Guangqian's theory of rhythm and emotion in the arts has, to this point,

66 *Wenyi xinlixue* 366.

67 Ibid. 366-367.

universalized aesthetic experience in order to elide questions of history or culture. Even animals—a favorite "naive" experimental subject in studies cited by Zhu, along with children and people belonging to "primitive" cultures, who all presumably exist outside of history—are said to evince emotional responses to musical stimuli, according to experiments conducted by Max Schoen.[68] In the passages we have discussed so far, abstract forms operate gesturally, as icons relating to the movements of the human body and its physiological systems; feeling and language must be consistent, he argues. But Zhu cannot ignore the possibility that art may also signify according to the arbitrary conventions of a particular cultural or historical context.

> As we already explained in detail during our discussion of the origins of poetry, poetic forms bear the traces of poetry's origin in song, music, and dance. They adhere to tradition, rather than being created specially by each poet according to his mood at a certain time. Poetry is not entirely free expression. . . . But doesn't this contradict our claim that feeling, thought, and language are consistent?
>
> 我們在討論詩的起源時已經詳細説明過，詩的形式大半為歌、樂、舞同源的遺痕。它是沿襲傳統的，不是每個詩人根據他的某一時會的意境所特創的。詩不全是自然流露。... 這番話與上章情感思想語言一致説不互相衝突麼？[69]

Zhu's solution to the conundrum posed is elegant: the reason why forms are not wholly original for each new work is that thought is also not wholly original. Poetic form, he argues, is like grammar, in that it is a way that a people are able to put the chaotic world into order. Just the way grammar does not change overnight, poetic forms are inherited and evolve slowly. The existence of divergent and mutually unintelligible cultural traditions is only due

68 Cited in both *Shi lun* 129 and *Wenyi xinlixue* 508.

69 *Shi lun* 118.

to historical accident; rhythms are still rhythms. Here as in "What Can Modern Poetry Learn from Classical Poetry?", Zhu has asserted the importance of social or historical context in artistic production and reception without fully abandoning his universalizing approach to human psychology.

There are hints as well that the rhythmical abstractions that constitute meter contain for Zhu a fundamentally different order of meaning from denotative language, which allows the two levels to bear on the meaning of the poem without conflict. "Rhythm is an abstraction, not a concrete scenario, so it cannot produce concrete emotions, like the anger, fear, jealousy, or hatred of our daily lives. It can only arouse indistinct, abstract outlines, like excitement, despair, joy, sorrow, ease, reverence, hope, tenderness, etc." 但是節奏是抽象的，不是具體的情境，所以不能產生具體的情緒，如日常生活中的憤怒、畏懼、妒忌、嫌惡等等，只能引起各種模糊隱約的抽象輪廓，如興奮 、頹唐 、欣喜 、淒惻 、平息 、虔敬、希冀、眷念等等.[70] The emotions that come from music and rhythm have no "object" (*duixiang* 對象); they are "formalized emotions." Where music is abstract, therefore, poetry may be concrete. The distinction seems to recall Zhu's efforts to define the basic distinction between poetry and prose, something he attempted multiple times.[71] That distinction is generally along the lines of "feeling" versus "thinking," denotation versus connotation ("stating" and "suggesting"),[72] meaning versus sound—"the matter may be understood solely

70 Ibid. 130.

71 See "Fulu san: Shi yu sanwen (duihua)" 附錄三：詩與散文（對話） in *Shi lun* 303-330, and *Shi lun* 105-118.

72 *Shi lun* 106-108.

from the meaning of the words, but the tone must be experienced in the sound of the words" 事理可以專從文字的意義上領會；情趣必從文字的聲音上體驗[73]—and perhaps also along the lines of Apollonian and Dionysian in Nietzsche's aesthetics. Although Zhu rejects such hard and fast distinctions, eventually reframing poetry and prose into a continuum instead of a binary, his insistence on "the intrinsic value of poetic meter" 詩的音律本身的價值[74] still reduces the operative distinction to the presence or absence of music: "the greatest value of meter is, naturally, its musicality. Music itself is an art that produces a deep aesthetic experience" 音律的最大的價值自然在它的音樂性。音樂自身是一種產生濃厚美感的藝術.[75] The abstract/concrete axis, which distinguishes the emotions produced by music from those produced by words, seems to map closely onto the affective/intellectual axis —the more "poetic," rhythmic, or musical texts occupying the more abstract, affective end of the continuum. By segregating content into the intellectual/prosaic and the affective/poetic, Zhu can preserve the latter as a space for the expression of universal emotions that appeal directly to the intuition by reference to the rhythms of human physiology.

Identity of Form and Content

Yet, when Zhu writes about the actual practice of literature—its writing, reading, and recitation—the boundary between the affective and intellectual levels disappears. His article

73 Ibid. 112.

74 Ibid. 119.

75 Ibid. 121.

on "The Sonic Rhythm of Prose" 散文的聲音節奏 makes some of the most interesting and serious claims of any of his works on literature, carrying to its extreme Zhu's frequent claim that poetry and prose are not fully distinct phenomena. A more predictable definition of prose might focus on rhythm as precisely what is *absent*, but Zhu's broad definition of rhythm allows him room to analyze not just the rhythm of metrical verse, but also free verse —or even prose. Zhu's traditional education, in which recitation practice would have been strongly emphasized even for unrhymed texts, helps to explain his willingness to explore this question. *Guwen* innovator Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) and the Tongcheng School 桐城派 of the Qing Dynasty (associated with Zhu's own hometown; Zhu's grandfather was a friend of Wu Rulun 吳汝綸, 1840-1903[76]) serve as precedents for the emphasis on musicality in prose writing, a quality which Zhu locates in "the rise and fall, opening and closing of paragraphs; the length of sentences; the tonal melody of characters; the parallelism and unevenness of passages" 段落的起伏開合，句的長短，字的平仄，文的駢散.[77] In fact, as Zhu points out, "It's strange to say, but Chinese prose observed parallelism in tone and meaning earlier than poetry did,"[78] pointing to the *Mencius* 孟子, *Xunzi* 荀子, and *Laozi* 老子 (*Daodejing* 道德經) as examples. As he does in his discussion of rhythm in *Shi lun*, Zhu casts the rhythm of written language as a question of gesture, something to be felt and imitated by the

76 "Cong wo zenyang xue guowen shuoqi" 從我怎樣學國文説起 in *Zhu Guangqian quanji* 3:442.

77 "Sanwen de shengyin jiezou" 散文的聲音節奏 in *Zhu Guangqian quan ji* (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987): 4.211.

78 *Shi lun* 202.

entire body, citing Han Yu's dictum, "When the breath is full, then the length of phrases and the pitch of tones will all be harmonious" 氣盛則言之短長，聲之高下，皆宜.[79]

> Understanding the sound and rhythm of written words is a very interesting matter. The average person thinks it requires sensitive ears, since sound produces sensation only when it is heard by the ears. In my experience, though, the ears may be important, but not as much as the muscles of the entire body. When I read a piece of prose with sonorous tones and fluid rhythms, my body's muscles seem to move in the same rhythm; it always produces a feeling of great pleasure, whether the feeling is tense or relaxed. If the melody and rhythms are flawed, my muscles feel awkward and uncomfortable, like I'm hearing the sound of a kitchen worker scraping char off the bottom of a pan. When I'm writing, if the mood strikes me, my muscles feel as though I am playing music, racing a horse, rowing a boat—I couldn't stop even if I wanted to. If my mood isn't right, then my train of thought withers, and this kind of internal, muscular rhythm isn't there. Even if I force myself to write, what I write is always awkward and halting, like an out of tune string. So I believe deeply that sound and rhythm are of supreme importance to prose writing.
>
> 領悟文字的聲音節奏，是一件極有趣的事。普通人以為這要耳朵靈敏，因為聲音要用耳朵聽纔生感覺 就我個人的經驗來説，耳朵固然要緊，但是還不如周身筋肉 我讀音調鏗鏘節奏流暢的文章，周身筋肉彷彿作同樣有節奏的運動；緊張，或是舒緩，都產生出極愉快的感覺。如果音調節奏上有毛病，我的周身筋肉都感覺侷促不安，好像聽廚子刮鍋煙似的。我自己在作文時，如果碰上興會，筋肉方面，也彷彿在奏樂，在跑馬，在盪舟，想停也停不住。如果意興不佳，思路枯澀，這種內在的筋肉節奏就不存在，儘管費力寫，寫出來的文章總是吱咯吱咯的，像沒有調好的絃子。我因此深信聲音節奏對於文章是第一件要事.[80]

The passage clearly connects two of the threads from *Shi lun*: the empathic, physiological aesthetics of rhythm on the one hand and the consistency of form and content on the other. In "The Rhythm of Prose," Zhu notes that "In fact, sound and sense cannot be forced apart. Sometimes the meaning appears in the sound" 聲音與意義本不能強分，有時意義在聲音上見出.[81] This rather mild observation is taken further later on in the article, where Zhu

79 "Sanwen de shengyin jiezou" 219.

80 Ibid. 221.

81 Ibid. 219.

claims that he has analyzed bad articles and discovered that, invariably, their rhythm is faulty. In these cases, "the author's thinking is not clear, his tone has not been polished" 作者的思路不清楚，情趣沒有洗練得好.[82] "If the thinking is disorderly, the rhythm will certainly be confused" 思路散亂，節奏一定錯亂.[83]

The fallacy potentially implied in these statements receives fuller elaboration in a series of three articles collectively titled "Literature and Language" 文學與語文. The first of the series, "Content, Form, and Expression" 內容、形式與表現, argues against two commonly-repeated formulas: "Meaning is external to language" *yi zai yanwai* 意在言外 and "Meaning comes before language" *yi zai yanqian* 意在言前.[84] The article begins with a prescription for writers: "What I want is precision and appropriateness in language, the total consistency between what the mind wants to say and what the hand writes, unambiguous, unexaggerated—the right words arranged in the right places" 我所要求的是語文的精確妥貼，心裡所要說的與手裡所寫出來的完全一致，不含糊，也不誇張，最適當的字句安排在最適當的位置.[85] Typically, Zhu points out that thinking involves the entire body—a person deep in thought will assume certain postures which, if interrupted, will disrupt his or her train of thought—and that the speech organ is just one other physical realization of

82 Ibid. 223.

83 Ibid. 225.

84 "Wenxue yu yuwen (shang): neirong, xingshi yu biaoxian" 226.

85 "Wenxue yu yuwen (shang): neirong, xingshi yu biaoxian" 226.

the act of thought. He cites the Behaviorists to say that "Thought is silent speech; speech is thought vocalized" 思想是無聲的語言，語言也就是有聲的思想.[86] Writing, therefore, is merely an act of recording, not of creation; something inexpressible in language is in reality merely something one has not thought through clearly enough. "When we search for the right words, we are not searching for words that are without meaning, and since words have meaning, what we are searching for is not the words alone but also their meaning. ... Together they constitute thought, and there is not any distinction of interior and exterior, or anterior and posterior" 在尋求字句時，我們並非尋求無意義的字句；字句既有意義，則所尋求的不單是字句而同時是它的意義。…統名之為思想，其中無內外先後的分別.[87] The meaning cannot exist before or beyond the words; both meaning and words come into existence together.

By arguing that meaning is neither exterior nor anterior to language but that the two are coterminous and inseparable, Zhu is insisting on the word, phrase, or passage's identity with itself. Any change in wording, any rephrasing or rearrangement, would produce a different meaning; in essence, this is a kind of radical formalism in which meaning is tied inextricably to each unique utterance. In fact, anyone who insists on the importance of formal features to works of art—as we wish to—must, to some degree, approve of this line of reasoning. If meaning is fully transportable, then there is little rationale for poetry to begin with—or for any new works of art, really, since, according to Zhu, "In terms of raw material,

86 Ibid. 229.

87 Ibid. 231.

everything in the world that can be thought or spoken of has already been said by people before" 就生糙的材料説，世間可想到可説出的話在大體上都已經從前人想過説過.[88] Only the form can be new, and it makes all the difference: "Change the form and you change the content" 變遷了形式，就變遷了內容.[89]

Such statements lead Zhu to a highly original view of language in the context of twentieth century China. If meaning is identical to the language that expresses it, translation is precluded by definition. Zhu reaches towards this conclusion in the third essay of "Literature and Language," entitled "*Wenyan*, *Baihua*, and Europeanization" 文言、白話與歐化. In fleshing out his program for the development of written *baihua*, Zhu advocates a certain degree of Europeanization of the Chinese language:

> Language and thought cannot be separated. As the method and content of thought change, so too must language change. Unless you absolutely reject Western scholarship, you cannot fail to consider accepting the organization peculiar to Western languages. You cannot use the language of the pre-Qin masters to "think" Kant or Whitehead's philosophy, and therefore you naturally cannot use that language to "express" their philosophy either.
>
> 語文和思想不能分開。思想的方式和內容變遷，語文就必跟着變遷，除非你絕對拒絕西方學術，要不然，你無法不酌量接受西方語文的特殊組織。你不能用先秦諸子的語文去"想"康德或懷特海的思想，自然也就不能用那種語文去"表現"他們的思想.[90]

This conclusion fits Zhu's moderate politics: if you must modernize, then you must also renovate cultural forms; on the other hand, as there is no need to throw out everything

88 "Xuanze yu anpai" in *Zhu Guangqian quan ji* (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987), 4:207.

89 Ibid.

90 "Wenxue yu yuwen (xia): wenyan, baihua yu ouhua" in *Zhu Guangqian quan ji* (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987), 4:247. There are some similarities here with Lu Xun's "stiff translation" *yingyi* 硬譯, though unlike Lu Xun Zhu is very much motivated by the pleasure of the text.

traditional, language and culture can evolve gradually as new concepts and truths come to light. Nonetheless, Zhu has now taken the somewhat contradictory position of advocating cultural assimilation while rejecting the possibility of translation.

Conclusions: The Rhythm of History

Where has Zhu Guangqian left us? The rhythm of a piece of writing must, on the one hand, reflect the organization of the thoughts it contains, be consistent with its content. On the other hand, it must satisfy the physiological and psychological rhythms inherent in the reader. The compromise that thought itself only changes by degrees and within constraints only papers over the vast differences between peoples, including the vast epistemological gaps confronting Chinese intellectuals in their encounters with Western scientific and philosophical discourse. Yet what makes *Shi lun* such a powerful exploration of poetics is its refusal to reduce aesthetic categories to cultural particulars; even the four tones that form the melodic patterning of China's greatest artistic accomplishment, the regulated verse of the Tang Dynasty, are not the sole property of the Chinese language—if we looked

hard enough, we could find them in the greatest English verse as well. Zhu Guangqian's aesthetics of rhythm is neither simply a productive misreading of Western theoretical models nor an unambiguous subjection of Chinese culture to imperialist foreign discourse; it represents rather Zhu Guangqian's search for categories of difference so absolute, so finely divided, as to encompass and erase all other distinctions at once. If the promised erasure of the line between self and other could exist, it would exist on this level.

In historical terms, Zhu's poetics are consistent with what Shu-mei Shih has described as the "modernity without rupture" advocated by the Beijing School.[91] If "rhythm is born from the succession, the intersection, the dialogue of identity and difference,"[92] then history too, with its "cycles of rise and fall, prosperity and decline,"[93] lends itself to a logic of rhythm, not of rupture—yet this logic is not strictly one of endless repetition, but rather of repetition and variation, antecedent and consequent. Zhu's literary historical account of the emergence of regulated verse poetry bears this out: "Literary history, of its nature, cannot be forced into periods" 文學史本來不可強分時期.[94] Regulated verse, Zhu explains, was built partly on the foundation of existing Chinese poetic practice and partly on the influence of linguistic contact with Sanskrit, beginning in the Eastern Han with the first wave of sutra translations.[95] Regulated verse is not a "foreign" verse form for Zhu,[96] but it was made

91 Shih 151.

92 *Shi lun* 124.
93 Ibid.
94 *Shi lun* 186.
95 Ibid. 205.

96 See Lucas Klein's dissertation *Foreign Echoes and Discerning the Soil* (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University,

possible through translation and cultural contact. "The study of Sanskrit pronunciation gave Chinese philologists an important impetus and a systematic method" 梵音的研究給中國研究字音學者一個重大的刺激和一個有系統的方法,[97] a condition that Zhu likens that period of cultural contact and study to his own time. The reason why twentieth century scholars have been able to discover so much more about the Chinese language than scholars during the Qing "is precisely because they lacked, and because we have, Western linguistics to serve as a model" 就因為他們沒有、而我們有西方語言學做榜樣.[98] The modern period, characterized in part by the massive, disruptive importation of discourses and cultural forms from the West, for Zhu, is a kind of repetition with variation of the Six Dynasties and its contact with Buddhism—suggesting that perhaps what comes next could be a variation on the motif of the golden age, the High Tang.

If Zhu Guangqian has one paramount strength, it is finding the similarities between disparate phenomena. Perhaps a confidence in the fundamental sameness of phenomena does lead him to a sort of "serenity," one which cannot support "vehement" revolution, cannot imagine a tear in the fabric of an unbroken musical text composed of an infinite number of pertinent relations. On the other hand, it is radical enough to claim one prefers noise to music—isn't it even more radical to claim there is no distinction between them to begin with?

2010): 192-246, for a reading of regulated verse poetry in light of its Indian-Buddhist roots.

97 *Shi lun* 206.

98 Ibid.

Chapter 4
Translatability

"Poetry is Poetry": The Untranslatable and the Already-Translated

The Untranslatable and the Already-Translated

As a literary tradition caught firmly in between China and the rest of the world, modern Chinese poetry constantly raises questions of translation. Because the early writers of New Poetry took Western poetic forms as their models, modern Chinese poetry has relied on the large-scale translation of texts into Chinese; at the same time, the extent to which themes, images, tropes, and even formal features have entered modern Chinese poetry from abroad has created a tradition in which even original composition is unavoidably implicated in the negotiation of foreign and native elements—in other words, a tradition in which composition is itself a kind of translation, where original poems are, in a sense, already-translated. The politics of such a negotiation stem from the unequal prestige of modern languages and literatures in the field of World Literature: at the start, new poetry's origins in the climate of the May Fourth New Culture movement, among affluent intellectuals trained at Western institutions or after Western models, meant that the flow of translation could only proceed in one direction, from the West to China.[1] (Even many non-Western poets who

1 At the same time, a well-known litany of Western modernist movements and figures including Ezra Pound and the Imagists, Art Nouveau, Bertolt Brecht, Sergei Eisenstein, Claude Debussy, Igor Stravinsky, and many others explicitly found inspiration in traditional East Asian arts.

became popular in China during this time such as Omar Khayyam and Rabindranath Tagore were approached through the intermediary language of English.) As a result, however admirable the cosmopolitan tendencies of modern poets may be, modern Chinese poetry is still undeniably implicated in the structural inequalities and power dynamics of world cultural markets, and to some nativist readers, it is a potentially treasonous product of colonial and postcolonial modernity whose legitimacy is constantly at issue. Modern Chinese poetry, in its hybridity, is a reflection of the cultural and political climate of the postcolonial world—in reality, merely one special case of cultural production that inevitably belongs to the historical conditions that surround its production and reception. At the same time, poetry embodies a dialectic of form and content whose historical roots reach much further back in time and much more deeply into a particular cultural tradition than those of film, say, or television, so the cultural politics of modern poetry and its status as already-translated become all the more salient.

The issue of modern Chinese literature as already-translated is not particular to the field of poetry; prose writing has also seen a lively debate over style and "Europeanization" 歐化, that is, the process of adapting Chinese to grammatical and stylistic tendencies characteristic of European languages. George Kao (1912-2008), who published many

translations in both English and Chinese under the penname Qiaozhi Gao 喬志高,[2] attacked the phenomenon in a footnote to his 1975 translation of Qian Zhongshu's 錢鍾書 (1910-1988) article "The Translations of Lin Shu" 林紓的翻譯.[3] Qian's article argues that the truly excellent translation, one which has attained the "realm of transformations" *huajing* 化境 to which all art aspires, should not read like a translation, "for a literary work in its own language will never read as though it has been through a process of translation" 讀起來不像譯本，因為作品在原文裡決不會讀起來像經過翻譯似的.[4] Kao, as translator, interjects,

> Qian would have been more accurate if he had said *hardly ever*. It is a well-known and deplorable fact that present-day native writers of the Chinese language (whether in Taiwan, Hong Kong, or mainland China) often produce writing that reads "as though it has been through a process of translation." In other words, they write a brand of Chinese that reads like some Western language. —— Translator[5]

The denigration of Europeanized syntax or of "translationese" (*fanyi ti* 翻譯體), Chinese that seems to have been translated from a European language, is part of the same debate over fidelity in translation in which Qian was participating through his essay. Lin Shu 林紓 (1852-1924) is often cited as evidence of the supposed trade-off between foreignizing

2 This name itself is a complicated bilingual pun. Qiao 喬 is a Chinese surname, encouraging us to read Zhigao 志高 as a personal name and reference to the conventional expression *zhigao qiyang* 志高氣揚, meaning proud and self-confident. At the same time, Qiaozhi (often written 喬治) is also a transliteration of the English name George, making the Chinese name a straight transliteration of the English "George Kao," with the order of personal and family names reversed from the Chinese. Qiao and gao, furthermore, rhyme and are etymologically related.

3 Qian Zhongshu, "The translations of Lin Shu," trans. George Kao, *Twentieth-Century Chinese Translation Theory*, ed. Tak-hung Leo Chan (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004): 104-114.

4 Ibid. 104; original in *Qian Zhongshu lunxue wenxuan* (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1990): 6.106.

5 Chan 116.

faithfulness and "smoothness" or readability in translation; Qian's article defends Lin's vivid but notoriously inaccurate fiction translations, on the basis that they were enjoyable to read and led him eventually to read the originals. Qian Zhongshu's defense of pleasure is supported by the etymological connections of the character *yi* 譯 "translate"; it is related, he reports, to the characters *you* 誘 (entice), *mei* 媒 (transmit), *e* 訛 (misrepresent), and *hua* 化 (transform). Moreover, Qian writes, the Han Dynasty dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 contains the following definition for the character *e* 囮 : "*E* means *yi* 譯. It is composed of *kou* [mouth] and *hua* [transform]. Those who lure birds tie a live bird to make them come; this is called *e*" 囮，譯也 。从口 、化 。率鳥者繫生鳥以來之，名曰囮.[6] According to Qian, translation is a kind of decoy—one pretends to be like the reader to entice him; Qian considered reading literature above all a pleasurable experience, and Lin Shu's translations succeeded in attracting him to the languages and literatures of the original works. By praising Lin's translations for the enjoyment they brought to him and many other readers, Qian argues against a kind of literal or "direct" translation (*zhiyi* 直譯) that violates the rules and conventions of the target language in its dogged adherence to the formal features of the original—the kind of foreignizing translation practice that, due to the important role of translated texts in twentieth century China, has normalized "translationese" as an available mode of original composition in George Kao's time.

Though Kao and others may object to prose writing that seems to have "been

6 "Lin Shu de fanyi" 18.

through a process of translation," it is possible to write a modern novel in Chinese without anyone questioning its Chineseness; the works of Bai Xianyong 白先勇, Eileen Chang 張愛玲, and Qian Zhongshu himself all draw complimentary comparisons to traditional Chinese fiction at the same time as they are undoubtedly modern. Conversely, modern Chinese poetry's credentials as "Chinese" are constantly in question: the critical cliché that modern Chinese poetry is essentially foreign, not Chinese, and may as well have been translated from some other language has been repeated since New Poetry's inauguration. A tension between acceptably "modern" or cosmopolitan borrowing and mere aping or incomplete assimilation of foreign elements recurs throughout the first hundred years of Chinese new poetry criticism —for instance, it surrounds Guo Moruo's exotic first collection *The Goddesses* 女神, which Wen Yiduo praises for its "modern spirit" (*shidai jingshen* 時代精神) and cosmopolitanism[7] at the same time as he criticizes its preference for Western color over Chinese color.[8]

> If I were in Guo's place [living in highly Westernized Japan], ... I would constantly remind myself that I am a Chinese person. I want to write new poetry, but Chinese new poetry. I don't want to become a Chinese-speaking Westerner, and I don't want people to mistake my works for translations of Western poetry.
>
> 若我是在郭君底地位，……我要時時刻刻想着我是中國人，我要做新詩，但是中國的新詩，我並不要做個西洋人説中國話，也不要人們誤會我的作品是翻譯的西文詩.[9]

As we saw in chapter two, this insinuation was repeated with regard to the Symbolist poetry

7 Wen Yiduo 聞一多, " 'Nüshen' zhi shidai jingshen" 女神之時代精神, *Wen Yiduo quanji* (Hong Kong: Nantong tushu gongsi, 1977): 3.185-194.

8 Wen Yiduo, " 'Nüshen' zhi difang secai" 女神之地方色彩, *Wen Yiduo quanji* (Hong Kong: Nantong tushu gongsi, 1977): 3.195.

9 Ibid. 197.

of the 1920s and Obscure (Menglong) poetry of the 1980s. In the 1950s, while discussing "national-ethnic form" *minzu xingshi* 民族形式 in literature and the arts, Ai Qing 艾青 scolded his fellow modern poets for failing to be essentially Chinese: "If you added 'translated by' to the writer's name, we would think a foreigner had written it, because it's missing a Chinese flavor. I myself have written many poems like this" 那種詩，假如在作者名字下面再加一個 '譯' 字，我們就會以為是外國人寫的，因為它們沒有中國的氣味。我自己就寫過不少這類的詩.[10] Guan Jieming 關傑明, firing a shot in the prolonged debate over Modernism in Taiwan, begins his article on "The Predicament of Modern Chinese Poets" 中國現代詩人的困境 by recounting how a graduate student of his, on flipping through Wai-lim Yip's translations of modern Chinese poets into English, remarked, "I didn't know so many Chinese poets wrote poems in English" 我沒想到有這麼多中國詩人寫英文詩.[11] Guan admits that Yip's skill may have been partly responsible for creating translations that seemed natural in English, but upon further consideration, he echoes what Wen Yiduo and Ai Qing had written decades before: New Poetry resembles Western (especially English or American) poetry too much; even original New Poetry seems as if it were translated.

The endpoint of such an observation is the suggestion that the "already-translated"

10 Ai Qing 艾青, "Shi de xingshi wenti" 詩的形式問題, *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中國現代詩論, ed. Yang Kuanghan and Liu Fuchun (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1986): 2.20. Interestingly, in the version of this essay collected in Ai's complete works (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi chubanshe, 1991), the last sentence has been excised.

11 Guan Jieming 關傑明, "Zhongguo xiandai shiren de kunjing" 中國現代詩人的困境, *Zhonghua xiandai wenxue daxi: Taiwan 1970-1989* 中華現代文學大系：台灣一九七〇－一九八九, ed. Yu Guangzhong 余光中 (Taipei: Jiuge chubanshe, 1989): 2.880.

New Poetry might as well go back where it came from; that it can simply be "untranslated" (into English etc.) without loss. This is Stephen Owen's by now familiar critique of contemporary (1980s) Chinese poetry as a mere extension of Western Modernism: a participant in a "World Poetry" that is able to circulate internationally through fluent, familiar translations into prestige-wielding languages (notably English) because it is composed according to rules inherited from French and English Modernism.[12] Because it is able to survive this swim upstream towards the sources of prestige (the Nobel Prize committee is mentioned, but we could also include the syllabi of university courses in the West, international book festivals, and other institutions of world literature), it receives institutional encouragement, while other, "less translatable" poetries are left for "internal consumption."[13] Crucial to the awareness of the already-translated is mourning for the loss of the irreducibly particular. The idea that something essential to poetry is untranslatable, that "Poetry has traditionally been built of words with a particular history of usage in a single language—of words that cannot be exchanged for other words,"[14] is what leads to the disparagement of translated poetry to begin with.

On the one hand, there is the belief that poetry contains the irreducibly original, which does not bear imitation, translation, or any other copying; on the other hand, there is

12 Stephen Owen, "What is World Poetry?", *New Republic* (19 Nov. 1990): 28-32. See chapter 1 for more on the World Poetry debates.

13 Stephen Owen, "Stepping Forward and Back: Issues and Possibilities for 'World' Poetry" in Modern Philology 100.4 (May 2003): 546.

14 "What is World Poetry?" 28.

the suggestion that, in a global literary field, "original" poetry could be composed only elsewhere, thousands of miles away, in Europe or America, or else in the irreducibly particular cultural past. The contemporary Third World can only produce texts that, to a Western reader, seem "already-read."[15] Yet, in the case of modern Chinese poetry, this experience does not belong only to the First World reader; Owen's article follows in the tradition of native Chinese critiques of modern Chinese poetry as well. Owen's distinction between "Chinese literature" and "literature that began in the Chinese language"[16] is no different from the distinction that native Chinese critics make between writing that seems to have been translated and writing that is bona fide Chinese. His article thus participates in the century-old modern Chinese discourse surrounding the relationship of original composition and translation, of "direct" (foreignizing) and "idiomatic" (nativizing) translation practices, of the possibility or desirability of translating poetry at all.

Paradoxes of Fidelity

Chinese translation theory in the twentieth century concerned itself largely with the supposed trade-off between fluency and faithfulness. Representing faithfulness is the view, elaborated by Lu Xun, that translations should force the phrase structure of foreign languages onto *baihua*, under the provocative label "stiff translation" *yingyi* 硬譯. In a series of *ad*

15 Longxi Zhang draws this comparison between Owen's review and Frederic Jameson's "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital." *Mighty Opposites* 130.

16 "What is World Poetry?" 30

hominem letters exchanged with the Crescent School-aligned Liang Shiqiu 梁實秋 (1903-1987), Lu associates "fluent translation" (*shunyi* 順譯) with pandering to readerly pleasure (*shuangkuai* 爽快), that is, with politically reactionary aestheticism.[17] Stiff translation simultaneously aims to introduce difficult modern thought into the Chinese consciousness, and at the same time expand the suitability for Chinese to express such modern thought—by filling in "deficiencies" *quedian* 缺點 such as its relatively paucity of subordinate phrases. The displeasure produced by Lu Xun's translation style is taken as evidence of the backwardness of most Chinese readers and the conventions of style familiar to them; difficulty is a badge of modernity. "My translations are not for the pleasure of the broad readership, but often create discomfort or even anger, hatred, and indignation" 我的譯作，本不在博讀者的 '爽快' ，卻往往給以不舒服，甚而至於使人氣悶，憎惡，憤恨.[18] Throughout the letters, Lu Xun continually meshes two seemingly separate issues: the linguistic difficulty of his translations of Soviet leftist writers (in this case Lunacharsky) on the one hand and the discomfort caused by the radical ideas contained in the translations on the other. Lu Xun implies that Liang is threatened by his translations not just because they are "stiff," but because they are unsettling to the status quo. In some ways this argument is a perplexing confusion of form and content—was Lunacharsky's text "stiff" in the original, and if not, was it the less radical for it?—but one can also see Lu Xun's agenda with respect to shaping the

17 Lu Xun 魯迅, "'Yingyi' yu 'wenxue de jiejixing'" 硬譯與文學的階級性, *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1987): 4.195-222.

18 Ibid. 197.

modern Chinese language, particularly in light of the history of modern Japanese.

> Japanese is very unlike Euro-American [languages], but [the Japanese] gradually added new grammar. Compared to the classical language, [modern Japanese] is more suited for translation without losing the vigorous tone it's always had. At first, of course they needed to 'trace the threads of the grammar,' which must have made a few people very unhappy, but once they got into the habit, [the new grammar] was assimilated. It became a given.
>
> 日本語和歐美很‘不同’，但他們逐漸添加了新句法，比起古文來，更宜於翻譯而不失原來的精悍的語氣，開初自然是須‘找尋句法的線索位置’，很給了一些人不‘愉快’的，但經找尋和習慣，現在已經同化，成為已有了.[19]

Here, the goal of "direct" or "stiff" translation is not only fidelity to the content of the original, but the expansion of grammatical and stylistic possibility *in the target language*—the formal renovation of Chinese.

"Stiff" translation is one approach to the issue of fidelity, or *xin* 信, which occupies a prominent place in Chinese theories of translation. Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854-1921) famously introduced his three criteria for successful translation in the preface to his rendition of Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, *Tianyan lun* 天演論: "The three difficulties of the enterprise of translation are fidelity, comprehensibility, and elegance. Seeking fidelity is already a great difficulty, but to attend to fidelity at the expense of comprehensibility is no better than not translating at all. For this reason, comprehensibility is the supreme among them" 譯事三難：信、達、雅。求其信已大難矣，顧信矣不達，雖譯猶不譯也，則達尚焉.[20] These three terms, fidelity (*xin* 信), comprehensibility (*da* 達), and elegance (*ya* 雅), did not originate with Yan—he borrowed them from the second century monk-translator

19 Ibid. 199.

20 Yan Fu 嚴復, *Yan Fu heji* 嚴復合集 (Taipei: Caituan faren Gu Gongliang wenjiao jijinhui, 1998): 7.176.

Zhi Qian 知謙[21]—but Yan's work set them as the primary standards of judgment in the Chinese discussion on translation throughout the twentieth century. Part of the reason for their influence seems to be their very imprecision, and subsequent writers have taken the opportunity to revise or re-order the list. For example, as Tak-hung Leo Chan points out, elegance was frequently rejected by Yan's followers, since it was considered to be a reference to Tongcheng-style classical prose;[22] as May Fourth writers were committed to the notion of *baihua* as the neutral prose style, the enforced "elegance" of classical prose made it unsuitable for translation in their view. Through the years, a number of important contributors to translation studies and criticism in China have revised Yan Fu's three criteria to place fidelity in the position of supreme importance, including Chen Xiying 陳西瀅 in 1929[23] and Zhu Guangqian in 1944.[24] Zhu's argument that the degree of comprehensibility and elegance in a translation should itself be faithful to those qualities in the original was reprised by linguist Yuen Ren Chao in 1968.[25] For instance, Chao argues that translating "You are a damn fool!" into Chinese as "*Ni shi yige hen bu zhihui de ren*" 你是一個很不智慧的人 (semi-literally: "You are a very unwise man"), would achieve elegance, but at the expense of faithfulness.

21 Chan 17.

22 Chan 6.

23 Chan 93-97.

24 Zhu Guangqian, "Lun fanyi" 論翻譯, *Zhu Guangqian quanji* (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988): 4.288-301.

25 Yuen Ren Chao, "Dimensions of Fidelity in Translation With Special Reference to Chinese" in *HJAS* Vol. 29 (1969): 109-130.

Similarly, a novelist would not render the speech of all his characters with equal fluency (Chao's translation of *da* 達, comprehensibility[26]), so neither should the translator. In essence, Chao argues, any characteristics of the translation—including stylistic elements—should correspond to the original. And yet, now we have begun to approach a paradox: we can no longer pretend to divide our original cleanly into form and content (or expression and meaning) and discard the one to preserve the other. Even the moment we have reduced our criteria to fidelity alone, that single question explodes back into a plethora of mutually incompatible fidelities: lexical, syntactic, functional, auditory.

Although Chao's term "multidimensional"[27] captures part of the problem of fidelity —there are various levels in the original to which one could be faithful—it does not address the complexity of trade-offs required. Fidelity is the requirement that a translated text be somehow the same as the original, a potentially paradoxical demand. Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 cites the *Fanyi mingyi ji* 翻譯名義集, a dictionary of Sanskrit Buddhist terminology from the Liu Song Dynasty (420-279), which explains the character *yi* 譯 in a way that expresses this paradox: "What is meant by translation [*yi* 譯] is change [*yi* 易]; it means you change what you have into what you lack" 譯之言，易也；謂以所有，易其所無.[28] Such

26 Let us boldly muddy the waters further: Zhao/Chao would prefer to translate these terms "fidelity, lucidity, and beauty," to create a pleasant "sound effect" in English, but he retreats from "lucidity" to "fluency" in the service of—what else—fidelity.

27 Chao 130.

28 Cited by Zhu Ziqing 朱自清, "Yi ming" 譯名, *Fanyi yanjiu lunwen ji* 翻譯研究論文集 (Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 1984): 39. Also paradoxically, this definition relies on a pun that can only work in Chinese, much like the oft-cited Italian phrase *traduttore*, *traditore*.

alchemy would seem to violate the principle of the conservation of matter, though, and Zhu cites other authorities which emphasize continuity, rather than change: the *Yangzi* 楊子 defines *yi* as "to pass on" 譯，傳也.[29]

The contradictions between the various possible dimensions of fidelity come out in the conflict between the proponents of "direct translation," or *zhiyi* 直譯, and proponents of what we might call "idiomatic translation," or *yiyi* 意譯.[30] From the perspective of direct translation advocates, proponents of idiomatic translation are frivolous aesthetes, afraid to confront radically foreign ideas, whereas to idiomatic translators, direct translators commit unforgivable violence against the target language. As Zhu Guangqian points out, both terms have a negative connotation: "direct translation" tends to imply the mechanical replacement of words with their definitions from a bilingual dictionary, ignoring the rules of grammar and usage in the target language, resulting in a translation that lacks fluency and comprehensibility (*tongshun* 通順); whereas "idiomatic translation" tends to imply a crude, imprecise approach that glosses over problems and difficulties in the original, covering up deficiencies in the translator's knowledge, or striving only to please the reader with its fluency —criticisms associated with the translations of the prolific but linguistically untrained Lin

29 Ibid.

30 *Yiyi* is also used to mean semantic translation (i.e. the usual meaning of translation) in contradistinction to *yinyi* 音譯, phonetic translation, or more properly transliteration. For example, rendering Finland *fenlan* 芬蘭 is phonetic translation, while rendering Iceland *bingdao* 冰島 is semantic translation.

Shu.[31] The danger in idiomatic translation is, for Zhu Guangqian, "anarchic translation" *luan yi* 亂譯, where the translator feels free to revise and improve the original without any sense of obligation to the criterion of fidelity; Zhou Zuoren uses the term "reckless translation" *hu yi* 胡譯,[32] and Mao Dun "distorted translation" *wai yi* 歪譯 (again, explicitly associated with Lin Shu).[33] In the case of Edward FitzGerald and his canonical but inventive translation of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*, Zhu coins the more neutral "revision-translation" *gai yi* 改譯, which borders on the totally legitimate practice of "composition" *chuangzao* 創造. In other words, an illegitimate "anarchic translation" can become completely legitimate the minute the criterion of faithfulness is suitably severed, by claiming an original composition based on, re-writing, or improving an original.

The Untranslatability of Poetry

By placing the word "translatability" above the title of this chapter, I do not mean to suggest that we can answer once and for all whether poetry is translatable. Surely there are enough glib over-generalizations on both sides already: where Shelley hates to sees a delicate violet violently incinerated in a chemist's crucible, Douglas Hofstadter claims "my general sense is that for *nearly* every pun in language X, there are one or more very close puns in

31 *Zhu Guangqian quanji* 4.299.

32 Zhou Zuoren 周作人, *Zhou Zuoren yiwen quanji* 周作人譯文全集 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2012): 9.424.

33 Mao Dun 茅盾, "Zhiyi, shunyi, waiyi" 直譯，順譯，歪譯, *Mao Dun wenyi zalun ji* 茅盾文藝雜論集 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1981): 1.412.

language Y"[34] and excoriates Nabokov's decision to translate *Eugene Onegin* into English prose as "absurd," "irrational," and "fatuous."[35] Neither relegating poetry to the mystical pedestal of monadism nor blithely declaring verse translation fundamentally possible (given only the translator's infinite capacity for cleverness) does justice to the problem. The only reasonable answer to the question, "Is poetry translatable?", must be "It depends." Specifically, it depends on what one considers to be essential in a poem—which can certainly include formal features and sound effects in addition to or instead of semantic meaning. Throughout our study of modern Chinese poetic form, the question of the essential and the extraneous, and Raymond Williams's double-reading of the term "form" as referring to both one and the other, has reappeared almost constantly, and no issue involves this binary more than translation, in which nonessential elements may be substituted provided that the essence of the original remains intact. The flip but familiar remark of Robert Frost that "poetry is what gets lost in translation" represents a certain attitude towards this question: if you insist on preserving a poem's meaning in translation from one language to another (that is, translation as it is conventionally known), you will invariably sacrifice the prosodic, paranomastic, connotational elements—aspects of the poem which for Frost and others constitute the poetic function. Alternatives do exist: the avant-garde practice of homophonic translation, for example Louis and Celia Zukovsky's translations of Catullus[36] or David

34 Douglas Hofstadter, *Le ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997): 404.

35 Ibid. 257.

36 Louis Zukovsky and Celia Zukovsky, trans., Paul Zukovsky, composer, *Catullus Fragmenta* (London: Turret

Melnick's *Men in Aida*[37] (an unfinished homophonic translation of Homer's *Iliad* into English), is radical in its disregard for meaning as the essential property of language, yet at the same time it is totally traditional in its preference for the sonic elements of poetry as constitutive of poetry's essence.

It is interesting that poetry translations into Chinese are extant from as early as the Eastern Han Dynasty,[38] and huge numbers of Buddhist *gathas* or *ji* 偈 were translated from Sanskrit into unrhymed Chinese verse, but it was not until the May Fourth era that anyone started to worry that poetry could not be translated. It comes as no surprise that some of the loudest worriers were also producing the most poetry translations. Zhou Zuoren repeatedly disparaged the enterprise of poetry translation, despite translating a huge number of poems from a variety of languages for *New Youth* 新青年 and other May Fourth cultural publications.[39] "Poetry cannot be translated. Only the original is a poem, and whatever translated text exists besides is just the explanations of a schoolteacher talking about Tang poems" 詩是不可譯的，只有原本一首是詩，其他的任何譯文都是塾師講唐詩的解

Books, 1969).

37 David Melnick, *Men in Aida* (Berkeley, California: Tuumba Press, 1983).

38 In fact, the *Shuo yuan* 說苑 contains a "Yue Song" 越人歌 presumably translated from the *Yue* language which Gu Zhengkun 辜正坤 dates to around 540 B.C., but considering only translations for which the original still exists the date is much more recent. See Hai An 海岸, ed., *Zhongxi shige fanyi bainian lun ji* 中西詩歌翻譯百年論集 (Shanghai: Shanghai waiyu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2007): ii-iii.

39 See Xiong Hui 熊輝, *Wusi yishi yu zaoqi Zhongguo xinshi* 五四譯詩與早期中國新詩 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2010): 26-7.

釋罷了.[40] In his preface to a translation published in *New Youth*, Zhou quotes the monk Kumārajīva (a.k.a. Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什, 334-413) to say that "Translation is like chewing up food to feed someone else" 翻譯如嚼飯哺人[41] and argues that "If you really want to translate it well, you had best not translate it at all" 真要譯得好，只有不譯.[42] Even in such profoundly discouraging language, however, we may detect the possibility of affirmation: explanations, such as a schoolteacher might give, do transmit something essential about the original. If someone is hungry, chewing the food for him will not destroy its nutritional value —and someone without the proper linguistic teeth could get food no other way. Later translation specialists such as Siguo 思果 (a.k.a. Cai Zhuotang 蔡濯堂 or Frederick Tsai, 1918-2004) postulate that, while prose texts including literature may be translated, poetry translations must either be "separate creations" 另外創造 or otherwise "lack any merit at all" 一無所有.[43] In particular, the problem is poetry's sonic qualities: poetry's "musical beauty," argues Siguo, borrowing Wen Yiduo's phrase,[44] "is fatal to the translator" 單就音樂的美來說，這就要了翻譯者的命.[45] The ultimate question, it seems, is not whether poetry may be translated after all, but what is really essential about the poem, and how may it be conveyed?

40 *Zhuo Zuoren yiwen quanji* 425.

41 Qtd Xiong 28.

42 Ibid.

43 Siguo 思果, *Fanyi yanjiu* 翻譯研究 (Taipei: Dadi chubanshe, 1972): 196.

44 See chapter three of this dissertation.

45 Siguo 199.

In other words, poetry is not essentially different from other literary translation (perhaps even from translation as such); it involves the same difficulties and compromises, just perhaps more intensely, depending whom you ask. Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898-1958) argued in 1921 that poetry was, in fact, fundamentally translatable:

> We also must break through the argument that poetry cannot be translated. The main reasons people claim poetry cannot be translated is that the essence of poetry—its thought and feeling—is in its sound [*yinyun* 音韻], that the sound of poetry is the expression of a person's internal feelings. We can still resolve this hesitation with what we said above, that thought and expression are separate, that the same thought can be expressed linguistically in more than one way.
>
> 詩的不可譯說，也不可不把他打破一下。他們主張詩的不可譯的要點，就在於：詩的本質－－思想與情緒是在於音韻裡面的；詩的音韻就是人的內部的情緒之表現。對於這個懷疑，仍舊可以用上面的“思想與‘表白’是分離的，同一的思想可以表現在一種以上的文字中”的話來解釋他.[46]

In arguing that literary works, including poetry, can be translated, Zheng does not reduce the work to its meaning; according to him, translating a poem without preserving its prosody does not mean it becomes prose, since prosody is not an essential feature of poetry. In structuralist terms, the poetic function is not confined to meter—Zheng cites Walt Whitman as proof.[47] In an article from roughly the same period, Mao Dun borrows a phrase from the *Analects* to describe poetry translation: we must "do it though we know it cannot be done" 知其不能而為之.[48] The flip side of this argument would be to consider the prosodical form to be integral to the meaning and therefore essential to the work, as Zhu Guangqian does:

46 Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸, "Yi wenxue shu de sange wenti" 譯文學書的三個問題, *Fanyi yanjiu lunwen ji* 69.

47 Ibid. 69-70.

48 Mao Dun 茅盾, "Yi shi de yixie yijian" 譯詩的一些意見, *Mao Dun wenyi zalun ji* 1.124.

"Works of literary value are necessarily complete, organic wholes; the feeling or thought and the language or style are fused into one, so [the translator] must be faithful to sound and rhythm at the same time" as he is faithful to the meaning 有文學價值的作品必是完整的有機體，情感思想和語文風格必融為一體，聲音節奏等必同時忠實.[49] "There are some works of literature that basically cannot be translated, especially poetry. (People who say poetry can be translated probably don't understand poetry)" 有些文學作品書本不可翻譯，尤其是詩（說詩可翻譯的人大概不懂得詩）.[50] Yet as we have seen in the previous chapter, Zhu applies the same exact reasoning to prose—the "rhythm of prose" is just as essential to the significance of the work. Zhu's notion of "organicity" seems to be the suggestion that no aspect of the work of literature is extraneous, that nothing at all may be changed without fundamentally altering the work. As a result, Zhu's theory easily implies a radical stance against the possibility of literary translation as such.

The slippage from poetry as fundamentally different from other language to poetry as further along on a certain continuum reveals the paradox of declaring poetry untranslatable. Guo Moruo poses the problem this way in a 1954 article: though he does not declare poetry untranslatable, he cautions, "Foreign poems translated into Chinese still have to *be like* poems" 外國詩譯成中文，也得像詩才行.[51] (Bian Zhilin later repeats this prescription

49 *Zhu Guangqian quanji* 4.290.

50 Ibid.

51 Guo Moruo 郭沫若, "Tan wenxue fanyi gongzuo" 談文學翻譯工作, *Renmin ribao* 人民日報 (29 Aug. 1954), *Renmin ribao 1946-2010 dianziban* 人民日報 1946－2010 電子版, 29 Jul. 2013. Emphasis added.

more tersely as "Translated poems have to be like poems" 譯詩得像詩.[52]) The demand for self-similarity we saw in George Kao's note above here reappears: a work of translated literature must be, first and foremost, a work of literature; a translated poem must be, first and foremost, a poem. The question begged by Guo is still what, exactly, a poem should be like. Two divergent interpretations of this elision are possible: either we are to take 'poetry' (*shi* 詩) as a universal, ahistorical concept, resulting in the tautological conclusion that something is a poem because Guo Moruo says it is a poem; or we might charitably posit a historically-determined "poetic function" that may have analogs across languages, the way specific lexical items or grammatical structures may have analogs that permit the very act of translation. If the original has features that make it poetic in the source language, we must find analogous features to make the translation poetic in the target language. Yet even this more charitable understanding of the demand for poeticity devolves back to the same problem of tautology. The specific implications of how a translated poem is to *xiang* ("resemble") a poem as such are spelled out to some extent by Guo: "A poem has a certain metrical structure, a certain prosody, a certain poetic element. If you cancel out all of this, then what gets translated has no flavor at all. Then it's nothing like a poem" 可是詩是有一定的格調，一定的韻律，一定的詩的成成份的。如果把以上這些一律取消，那麼譯出來就毫無味道，簡直不像詩了.[53] Guo gestures initially towards a definition of poeticity

52 Bian Zhilin, "Wusi yilai fanyi duiyu Zhongguo xinshi de gongguo" 五四以來翻譯對於中國新詩的功過 183.

53 "Tan wenxue fanyi gongzuo."

grounded in formal elements—metrical structure and prosody—but then, conscious perhaps of overly restricting this definition or of opening the grand gates of poetry to undistinguished doggerel, veers back towards vague tautology. Having just said that poetry has a "certain poetic element" *yiding de shi de chengfen* 一定的詩的成分, Guo immediately decides that this poetic element is common to *all literature*: "At root, any work—prose, novel, drama—has poetic elements. All good works are poems. One [as a translator] cannot do without poetic training" 本來，任何一部作品，散文，小説，劇本，都有詩的成份，一切好作品都是詩，没有詩的修養是不行的.[54] Guo compares this ineffable literary quality to the alcoholic component of spirits: "You can't turn a glass of vodka into a glass of tap water. You at least have to trade it for a glass of *fenjiu* or *maotai* to have done your job. If it turns into a glass of water, especially if it's got some silt on it, that's no good" 一杯伏特卡酒不能換成一杯白開水，總要還他一杯汾酒或茅台，才算盡了責。假使變成一杯白開水，裡面還要夾雜些泥沙，那就不行了.[55] Just as with Zhu Ziqing, Guo relies on an essentialized notion of irreducible poeticity that slips quickly into a continuum of literariness, which becomes a property of any language. These arguments amount to saying, "Translatable language is translatable, but untranslatable language is not."

The conclusion I wish to draw from this discussion is well put by Guo's fellow Creation Society member Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾 (1897-1984). "Whenever we come to the

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

question of whether poetry can be translated, we really have to start by asking, 'What is poetry?' But this is not something to define superficially in a few lines—better just to say, 'Poetry is poetry'" 一講到譯詩能不能的問題，實在說起來，我們又非由"甚麼是詩？"著手研究不可。然而這不是三言兩語所能道盡，而與其對於詩加一些淺薄的界說，無寧說"詩就是詩".[56] Uncomfortably, the question of how poetry may be translated leads backwards to whether poetry may be translated—and from there, we are led to ask what, after all, a poem is, and, implicitly, if a *shi* 詩 is a poem. The question is certainly not trivial: traditionally, Chinese has numerous categories of rhymed or metrical writing in addition to *shi*—for instance, *ci* 詞 and *fu* 賦—that trouble the assumed equivalence of poem and *shi*, just as free verse in French and English led Chinese writers to expand their definition of *shi* (as in Zheng Zhenduo's reaction to Whitman above).[57] The establishment of equivalence between 'poetry' and *shi* upsets the structures of difference on the Chinese side; it seems plausible that what Guo Moruo means when he says "translated poems have to be like poems" is that "translated [Western] poems have to be like [Western] poems," even though that is quite the opposite of the surface implication that a poem in the source language should become a poem in the target language. Is the paramount task of the poetry translator to replicate the distinctive features of the poetic function as it exists in the Western source language, or to fulfill the poetic function as it exists in the target language, Chinese? What

56 Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾, "Lun yishi" 論譯詩, *Cheng Fangwu wenji* 成仿吾文集 (Jinan: Shandong daxue chubanshe, 1985): 121.

57 It goes without saying that the expansion of the category is not exactly reciprocal: the existence of *fu* has not troubled many Westerners' understanding of poetry as a category—though perhaps the *haiku* has.

happens when the target language is undergoing its own transformations, where translators are not only tasked with putting a source poem into Chinese, but redefining Chinese itself by virtue of the act of translation?

Lydia Liu asserts that translations are not based on actual equivalences, but on "tropes of equivalence" asserted through acts of translation.[58] The same principle holds for linguistic units other than words, including formal features such as rhyme and meter and the category of poetry which they (may) define. The "certain poetic element" that unifies the poetry of all nations or all great art, regardless of medium, is illusory—but no more so than any of the other "illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions"[59] necessary for any translation, or for the relation of any one person's experience to any other's. The question is not whether poetry is uniquely irreducible, but how writers and translators locate its essential properties.

Establishing Formal Equivalences: Early *Baihua* Poetry Translation and the "Metrical Imaginary"

Besides publishing his experiments in original *baihua* poetry in the 19-teens, Hu Shi is further credited with revolutionizing Chinese poetry a second time in 1919, by producing a *baihua* translation of Sarah Teasdale's poem "Over the Roofs." Hu Shi's rendition appears after Teasdale's original below.

OVER THE ROOFS

58 Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity, China 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995): 40.

59 Liu 3-4, quoting Nietzsche's "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense."

Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)

I said, "I have shut my heart
As one shuts an open door,
That Love may starve therein
And trouble me no more."

But over the roofs there came
The wet new wind of May,
And a tune blew up from the curb
Where the street-pianos play.

My room was white with the sun
And Love cried out in me,
"I am strong, I will break your heart
Unless you set me free."

關不住了！

我說"我把心收起，
像人家把門關了，
叫愛情生生的餓死，
也許不再和我為難了。"

但是屋頂上吹來，
一陣陣五月的濕風，
更有那街心琴調，
一陣陣地吹到房中。

一屋裡都是太陽光，
這時候愛情有點醉了，
他說，"我是關不住的，
我要把你的心打碎了！"[61]

但是五月的濕風，[60]
時時從屋頂上吹來；
還有那街心的琴調
一陣陣的飛來。

Hu's translation is faithful to Teasdale's original on multiple formal levels. It is lineated like the original, with the second and fourth line of each stanza indented; its punctuation mimics

60 Hu Shi revised the second stanza after the initial publication. I have placed both side by side.

61 Liao Qiyi 廖七一, *Hu Shi shige fanyi yanjiu* 胡適詩歌翻譯研究 (Beijing: Qinghua Daxue chubanshe, 2006): 306-308.

the original (though with some variation, for instance adding line-final commas where Teasdale has incorporated enjambment). Hu replicates the ABCB rhyme scheme, notably by employing "feminine" rhymes (where two syllables rhyme and the final syllable is unstressed, such as *guan le/nan le*, *zui le/sui le*, and in the revised version, *chui lai/fei lai*). Each of these features, in fact, requires extending the practice of Chinese-language poetry somewhat, but the last one in particular is an extremely self-conscious importation of prosodic categories from European languages. Even in English, the term "feminine" refers to grammatical gender in French, where feminine nouns tend to end in an unstressed schwa. For Hu to adapt this practice to Chinese means that first determining that sentence-final aspect particles (such as *le/liao* 了) and direction markers (*lai* 來) can be included in poetic language, analyzing these morphemes as suffixes and not free-standing words, treating them as unstressed, and concluding that they do not need to rhyme on their own. Furthermore, Hu's revised version of the translation seems to have been motivated, not by a desire for improved accuracy, but in order to use feminine rhymes in all three stanzas. By adapting the first line of the earlier version of the stanza (*Danshi wuding shang chuilai* 但是屋頂上吹來 "But from above the roof there blew over") as the second, rhyming line of the newer version (*Shishi cong wuding shang chuilai* 時時從屋頂上吹來, "At times from above the roof blew over"), Hu consciously decides to place the rhyme on *chui*, not *lai*. Placing these two versions side by side, it is possible to see Hu re-analyzing *chuilai* from two verbs to a verb plus a suffix.

"Feminine" rhymes did have a pre-existing analog in Chinese. See for instance Tang

poet Chen Ziang's 陳子昂 (c. 661-702) four-syllable couplet, from "Auspicious Clouds" 慶雲章:

> 慶雲光矣，周道昌矣。　　*qingyun guang yi / Zhoudao chang yi*
>
> The auspicious clouds are bright,
> The way of Zhou is prosperous.

The final syllable of each line of this couplet is the particle *yi* 矣, and the rhyme is placed on the third syllable instead (*guang*, *chang*); other than this couplet, though, the poem contains only end-rhymes. The "feminine" rhymes recall similar metrical structures in the Zhou Dynasty *Book of Odes* 詩經, where four-syllable lines often rhyme on the third syllable, leaving a grammatical or expressive particle at the end of each line, and marks this particular couplet, which invokes Tang continuity with the Zhou, as important through its archaism. Conversely, these four lines of five-syllable verse from the seventh of Chen's poems titled "Feelings" 感遇 show the more usual rhyming practice from *shi* poetry:

> 白日每不歸，青陽時暮矣。　*Bairi mei bu gui / qingyang shi mu yi.*
> 茫茫吾何思，林臥觀無始。　*Mangmang wu he si / lin wo guan wu shi.*
>
> The bright sun never comes to earth; now verdant spring has reached its end.
> What is it that has me lost in thought? I lie beneath the trees and behold the Beginningless.

Chen uses the sentence-final perfective particle *yi* 矣 to emphasize the limited duration of the spring; the effect is even more dramatic when it is made to rhyme with *wushi* 無始, that which is without beginning (a term which may have Buddhist overtones). The difference is not merely formal, but extends from the form to the range of expressive possibilities: in Hu's

feminine endings, a line ending in *le* could only rhyme with another line ending in *le*, whereas in parallel couplets, the particle indicating completion is made to rhyme with something conveying the illusory nature of all beginnings and all endings.

Though rhyming exists in many poetic traditions around the world, the specifics of how and when it is done are not consistent from tradition to tradition, nor do the relationships of equivalence that govern the possibility of rhyming follow from any generalizable rule about phonology. This observation may be making a rather simple correspondence between languages—English and Chinese, for instance—more complicated than it needs to be, but the difficulty of taking the rules of rhyme and meter for granted illustrates the situatedness of poetic form and its constituent categories. Hu Shi and the many other poets translating foreign verse into *baihua* were establishing equivalences on a formal level, often by innovating in the target language itself, and creating the possibility for original composition in *baihua*. This process upsets comfortable literary-historical hierarchies by placing the translation ahead of the original, and Hu Shi's translation of Teasdale, as the first of its kind, puts a relatively undistinguished poem, largely forgotten in its original language, into an originary role in the Chinese context. Bian Zhilin observes that Hu Shi's translations were even more successful and influential than his original *baihua* poetry—calling them his "carelessly planted willows" (*wuxin zhong liu*) 無心種柳, as in the Chinese proverb, "the flowers he cultivated never blossomed, while the willows he carelessly planted grew into a

canopy" 有心種花花不成，無心插柳柳成蔭.[62] Indeed, *baihua* has so long been the accepted, appropriate vehicle for poetry translation into Chinese, metrical translations as well as free verse, that the practice of translating into *wenyan* or traditional verse forms that existed for several decades around the turn of the twentieth century seems absurd now. Xiong Hui's 熊輝 recent, comprehensive study *Translated Poetry of the May Fourth Era and Early Chinese New Poetry* 五四譯詩與早期中國新詩 adopts an evolutionary teleology when speaking about the development of *baihua* poetry translation:

> The curtain had already risen on poetry translation during the late Qing, but the highest achievement of translated literature of that period is translated fiction. The form of translated poetry still gave off a strong scent of 'classical poetry.' It had not escaped from the rut of traditional poetry.
>
> 詩歌翻譯在清末就已經拉開了序幕，但那時的翻譯文學以翻譯小說為其最高成就的標誌，譯詩在形式上還散發着濃郁的 '古體詩' 味，沒有脱離傳統詩歌的窠臼.[63]

In Xiong's line of thinking, which accepts the May Fourth paradigm more or less uncritically, the Chinese poetic tradition is something to be "escaped" from (*tuoli* 脱離), something that, in fact, stinks. Translator and critic Huang Gaoxin 黃杲炘 compares translating into classical Chinese to dressing a foreigner up in a traditional long robe to have him recite *xiangsheng* 相聲, or forcing a foreign woman's feet into tiny embroidered shoes.[64] The comparison suggests that Chinese tradition is at best curiously funny and at worst shameful

62 "Wusi yilai fanyi duiyu Zhongguo xinshi de gongguo" 184.

63 Xiong 23.

64 Huang Gaoxin 黃杲炘, "Yishi de jinhua: Yingyu shi Hanyi" 譯詩的進化：英語詩漢譯, *Zhongxi shige fanyi bainian lun ji* 中西詩歌翻譯百年論集, ed. Hai An 海岸 (Shanghai: Shanghai waiyu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2007): xxii.

and inhumane.

In the process of defining anything from "old China" as peculiar and smelly, *baihua* becomes something neutral, a playing field on which Chinese readers may have access to the rest of the world—or at least the West of the world—without the deluding blinders of traditional aesthetic values. It is important to note that advocating *baihua*, whether in translations or original compositions, does not equate to disparaging Chinese tradition, but rather merely to relegating Chinese traditional forms to the realm of the particular and allowing the Western forms to achieve universality. Cultural imperialism, in this case, is not viewed as the chauvinistic choice—modern scholars of translation studies often label the late Qing classical language translations "Sinocentric"[65] (*wenhua zhongxinzhuyi* 文化中心主義, literally culture-centric, but here meaning culturally Sino-centric[66]) or "reductive" *guihua* 歸化. Conversely, arguments in favor of returning to traditional verse forms for translation tend to have a highly racialized tone,[67] a kind of essentialist, postcolonial neoconservatism not unlike that of Zheng Min's critique of the May Fourth vernacular literature movement.[68]

65 Xiong 42.

66 All of these terms, including the suffix *zhuyi* 主義 "-ism", acquired their current usage in Chinese by translation from Western languages, and yet they may be arranged in Chinese scholarly language in such a way that does not correspond to English usage and resists fluid translation. In partial rebuttal to George Kao, "Europeanized Chinese" is a kind of Chinese, not a kind of English.

67 For instance, see Feng Huazhan 豐華瞻, "Tan yishi de 'guihua'" 談譯詩的歸化, *Zhonghua dushu bao* 中華讀書報 (10 Dec. 1997).

68 Zheng Min 鄭敏, "Shijimo de huigu: Hanyu yuyan biange yu Zhongguo xinshi chuangzuo" 世紀末的回顧：漢語語言變革與中國新詩創作, *Jiegou—jiegou shijiao: yuyan, wenhua, pinglun* 結構—解構視角：語言・文化・評論 (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 1998): 91-120. See chapter one of this dissertation.

In rejecting classical Chinese as incapable of producing faithful translations of Western poetry, poet-translators set about the work of forging a poetic language that could accommodate those Western originals, especially their formal and metrical features. Since rhyme schemes, meters, patterns of assonance and so on do not have any semantic value to speak of, they are not so much translated as adapted—and yet this process of adaptation raises many of the same questions as translation does, for finding "equivalences" on a formal level is no easy task. Even what counts as a rhyme could not be taken for granted in the creation of modern *baihua* poetry: traditionally, syllables needed to belong to the same tonal category in order to rhyme, while *baihua* poets and translators chose a broader definition of rhyming, unconstrained by tonal category—and one cannot help but wonder if Hu Shi and the other early *baihua* poets preferred to ignore tone because tone does not affect rhyme or meter in Western languages. Even apart from the issue of tone, categories of rhyme are subject to the vagaries of convention as much as actual phonetic values. Starting in the seventh century, Chinese poems rhymed according to categories laid out in rhyme dictionaries such as the *Qieyun* 切韻 and *Guangyun* 廣韻, or the more recent *pingshui yun* 平水韻. Standardized rhyme dictionaries ensured that poets from various regional backgrounds could rhyme consistently, but they also removed any *necessary* connection between acceptable rhyming practice and the actual sound of any particular poet's speech; just as contemporary readers of English poetry are accustomed to perceiving a rhyme in

"rain" and "again," readers of classical Chinese poetry must imagine rhymes where spoken vowel sounds are actually quite different. Poets of the Republican period, many of whom originated in coastal Southern cities, rhymed almost at random according to Beijing pronunciation, dialect pronunciation, classical rhyme categories, and even the extremely flexible "thirteen tracks" *shisan che* 十三轍 rhyming system of Peking Opera.[69] The rhyme pattern of Teasdale's "Over the Roofs," for instance, is preserved in Hu Shi's translation, but only if we accept not only its feminine rhymes, but also the conventional equivalence of vowels in *qi* 起 and *si* 死, which do not actually contain the same vowel in Beijing pronunciation.

Modern Chinese is not unique in facing any of these issues: the translation and importation of foreign meters is also an important issue in the history of English verse, as Chinese writers well know—many critics writing on poetry translation in Chinese refer to Matthew Arnold's lectures "On Translating Homer" to argue over the desirability of verse translation.[70] In those lectures, Arnold criticizes existing translations of Homer for failing to capture the classical poet's flowing hexameter, which Arnold believed could be the basis for a new national meter, even supplanting iambic pentameter.[71] Complicating the issue is the fact

69 Lloyd Haft, *The Chinese Sonnet: Meanings of a Form* (Leiden: Research School of Asian, African, and American Studies, Universiteit Leiden, 2000): 70 *et passim*.

70 See Chen Xiying 陳西瀅, "Lun fanyi" 論翻譯, *Fanyi yanjiu lunwen ji* 135-143, and Zeng Xubai 曾虛白, "Fanyi zhong de shenyun yu da—Xiying xiansheng 'Lun fanyi' de buchong" 翻譯中的神韻與達－－西瀅先生論翻譯的補充, *Fanyi yanjiu lunwen ji* 150-156.

71 See Yopie Prins, "Metrical Translation: Nineteenth-Century Homers and the Hexameter Mania," *Nation, Language and the Ethics of Translation*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005): 231.

that English meter, unlike Greek, is based on quality instead of quantity, and that no one in nineteenth-century England could, in fact, say definitively how classical Greek verse would have sounded. Nevertheless, there was a powerful sense that a modern reader who was well enough schooled in Homer could sense its flow. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's nephew, Henry Nelson Coleridge, said, "It is idle to attempt to lay down rules for the rhythm of the Iliad; those who have read the poem, know and feel, though cannot understand or imitate, its incomparable melody";[72] hexameter was frequently compared to water flowing in streams and oceans or air flowing in breezes or human breath. Because no one knew how it sounded, poets were free to imagine it as much more melodious than English, unfathomable and inimitable. For these reasons, Yopie Prins has coined the term "metrical imaginary" to refer to meter not as an objective, material fact of the sound of language, but as a socially mediated, discursive construct, one which was every bit as implicated in the politics of defining the modern British nation in an era of empire as it would be in defining Chinese nationalism during the May Fourth era.

> Rather than assuming a transhistorical definition of meter as a fixed form that can be transported from source language to target language, we might look for the historical transformation of metrical forms through translation, and so bring into view the cultural function of metrical translation as a complex mediation and recirculation of literary forms at a particular moment within a particular culture.[73]

The same principle applies to all the formal features of poetry—rhyme, assonance, tonal regulation, parallelism, and so on. What constitutes a valid, faithful translation of a foreign

72 Quoted Prins 236.

73 Prins 229.

poem? Must it "be like a poem" (Guo Moruo) in the target language, and if so, what "imaginary" preconditions are necessary to make this identity—the translated poem as poem, the translated work of literature as work of literature, the tethered copy as independent original—possible?

If the demand for faithfulness is paradoxical and formal equivalences must be established through practice, rather than inherent similarity, what happens when a poem from one language is reproduced in an alien meter—in Dryden's words, "to make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age"?[74] Before Hu Shi started composing *baihua* translations, he and others worked to make Byron speak such Chinese—if not as he would have spoken, but at least as he would have written—if he had been a late Qing poet. Admitting that the definition of essential poeticity is arbitrary and that poetic forms are textually constructed without necessary reference to actual speech, we are permitted to imagine a world of possibilities for verse translation. In the final section of this chapter, we will consider Hu Shi's translation of Byron's "Isles of Greece" into Chinese using the formal and stylistic conventions associated with Qu Yuan 屈原.

Make It Old

Even more than his English Romantic contemporaries, George Gordon, Lord Byron

74 John Dryden, *Virgil: The Aeneid, Translated by John Dryden, With Mr. Dryden's Introduction* (New York: The Heritage Press, 1940) lxi.

(1788-1824), held a great deal of interest for Chinese readers, especially those committed to the ideals of liberty and revolution. Byron seems to inspired the most interest during two highly idealistic periods: the late-Qing/early-Republican period on the one hand and the early Mao years on the other, just from the publication of translations of "The Isles of Greece," a sequence of sixteen six-line stanzas which originally appeared as a digression in Byron's mock-epic, *Don Juan*. The verses appear in canto III, when, shipwrecked in the Aegean Sea, Juan is cared for by the beautiful Haidee, and they are entertained by "Dwarfs, dancing girls, black eunuchs, and a poet."[75] The poet character in this scene is viciously satirized by Byron as a liar and a mercenary—the couplet "He lied with such a fervour of intention— / There was no doubt he earn'd his laureate pension"[76] is a jab at another "turncoat,"[77] the "Tory ultra-Julian" and poet laureate Bob Southey (1774-1843), to whom the entirety of *Don Juan* is sarcastically dedicated.[78] Nonetheless, "The Isles of Greece," which is what the poet "[sang], or would, or could, or should have sung, / ... in tolerable verse,"[79] is marked by the sincerity of its speaker, as opposed to the relentless irony of the main narration. The poet, talented if lacking conviction, decries the rule of Greece by the Ottomans while alluding to the past glories of ancient Greek civilization. The fact that Byron

75 *Don Juan* III.618.

76 III.639-640.

77 III. 641.

78 "Dedication" l. 135.

79 III.785-6.

later died of fever while on his way to aid in the Greek War of Independence against the Turks allows us to take the stanzas even more seriously; further, Byron wrote elegiacally about the Turkish rule of Greece in several of his major works.[80] As a well-meaning opportunist who espouses righteous views when it happens to be in his interest to do so, the poet-speaker of "The Isles of Greece" is no worse or better than most of the amoral characters in *Don Juan* —above all the lover Juan himself, who, in his devotion to each successive lover, innocently betrays all of his previous lovers. Like Juan, the poet is guilty of, if anything, a kind of "loyal treason,"[81] the betrayal of some principles in the interest of faithfulness to others. This condition of moral relativism is precisely the one inhabited by our translators, the "faithful bigamists"[82] who cannot simultaneously maintain total faithfulness to both the source and the target language, but who "do it thought they know they cannot."[83]

The sincerity of "The Isles of Greece," as opposed to the irony of the rest of *Don Juan*, helped make the passage appealing to idealistic Chinese translators, who viewed Byron as a hero as well as a poet, and who saw clearly the similarities between the crisis of Chinese national shame and the rule of the Ottoman Empire over Greece—which, like China, was a nation that traced its roots to a proud classical tradition. Lu Xun made this connection in his

80 "Ere Greece and Grecian arts by barbarous hands were quell'd" (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* I.954 *et passim*), "Such is the aspect of this shore— / 'Tis Greece—but living Greece no more!" (*The Giaour* 91-92).

81 *Don Juan* III.843

82 Barbara Johnson, "Taking Fidelity Philosophically," *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985): 143.

83 Byron's *Don Juan* also constantly thematizes mistranslation, even using the rhyme and meter to force the reader into mispronouncing all of the Spanish names.

essay on "The Power of *Mara* Poetry" 摩羅詩力説 which apotheosized Byron as the quintessentially demonic hero-poet and savior figure. In Liang Qichao's 梁啟超 (1873-1929) *A Future History of New China* 新中國未來記, which contained the first partial translation into Chinese of the poems, the characters Huang and Li agree upon hearing someone reciting Byron's works that "Though Byron composed [*The Giaour*] to spur on the Greeks, when we hear it today, it seems like it could be speaking to us Chinese" 他這詩歌，正是用來激勵希臘人而作 ◦但我們今日聽來，倒像有幾分是為中國説法哩,[84] and that every line in "The Isles of Greece" "seems like it is speaking to Chinese people of today" 句句都像是對着現在中國人説一般.[85] If Byron's speaker, in the third stanza, "could not deem himself a slave," our Chinese translators can and do—though they are visitors to Byron's age and language, their identification with Greece is much more direct than Byron's, who deprecates "The Isles of Greece" as nothing but a crowd pleaser that an opportunistic poet could recite to a patriotic Greek audience.

Like the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam (or more properly, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* of Edward FitzGerald), "The Isles of Greece" was translated into Chinese repeatedly during the twentieth century by a number of well-known poets and translators, under the conventional title "Lament for Greece" 哀希臘. A number of *baihua* translations, rhymed

84 Liang Qichao 梁起超, *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* 新中國未來記, Zhongguo jindai xiaoshuo daxi 中國近代小説大系 (Nanchang: Baihuazhou wenyi chubanshe, 1996): 62.

85 Ibid. 62.

and unrhymed, exist, as well as five versions in various classical verse forms. Such a profusion of retranslations both defies and supports the cliché that poetry is untranslatable—"The Isles of Greece" is eminently translatable, but never definitively translatable.[86] When Liang Qichao produced the first translations from "The Isles of Greece" in *A Future History of New China*, he translated using *qu* 曲 melodies, which he admits prevented him from rendering their meaning exactly. However, he emphasizes in a marginal comment that the task he has undertaken is extremely worthwhile.

> The author [i.e. Liang] has long aspired to translate the great works of poetry in foreign languages using Chinese tunes. Although this is a task of the greatest difficulty, if it could be achieved, it would be a great accomplishment in for the literary revolution. I believe that some day, someone will certainly do it. These two excerpts are no mean feat either.
>
> 著者常發心欲將中國曲本體翻譯外國文豪詩集。此雖至難之事，然若果有此，真可稱文壇革命巨現。吾意他日必有為之者。此兩折亦其大.[87]

Liang's note expresses quite the opposite of the prevailing post-May Fourth assumption that translated poetry should preserve the formal features of the original. For Liang, translation into Chinese meant "using Chinese tunes," and he hoped the "literary revolution" could

86 I am reminded of a friend's joke that quitting smoking was the easiest thing in the world to do; he'd done it dozens of times.

87 *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* 63n.

produce many more translations after his model.

Subsequent translators did continue this work, and they shared with Liang his assumption that a poem translated into Chinese should look like a Chinese poem. Two complete translations of "The Isles of Greece" using classical Chinese verse forms would appear during the late Qing, and two more would follow during the first two decades of the Republican period. Ma Junwu 馬君武 (1881-1940) translated the entire sequence into seven-syllable verse in the winter of 1905,[88] and Su Manshu 蘇曼殊 (1884-1918) retranslated it using eight lines of five-syllable verse for each stanza, published in 1911 in his collection *The Sound of the Tides* 潮音 and again in 1914 in *Selected Poems of Byron* 拜輪詩選.[89] Hu Shi, dissatisfied with the "errors and omissions" (*ewu* 訛誤) of Ma's version and the "obscure diction" (*cizhi youhui* 詞旨幽晦) of both Ma's and Su's, undertook a retranslation in 1914 while he was in America, using a freer *sao*-style verse (*saoti* 騷體) that permitted lines and stanzas of unequal length. Finally, Hu Huaichen 胡懷琛 (1886-1938) retranslated the sixteen-stanza sequence in 1923 and '24,[90] basing much of his diction on Hu Shi's version, but condensing it into eight lines of five-syllable meter per stanza. Interest in the poem seems to have subsided until after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, when several

88 Ma Junwu 馬君武, *Ma Junwu shi zhu* 馬君武詩注 (Nanning: Guangxi minzu chubanshe, 1985): 141.

89 The existence of editions from 1908 and 1912 has not been verified. See *Manshu waiji: Su Manshu bian yi ji sizhong* 蘇曼殊外集：蘇曼殊編譯集四種, ed. Su Shaozhang 蘇少璋 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2009): 183.

90 Hu Huaichen 胡懷琛, *Hu Huaichen shige conggao* 胡懷琛詩歌叢稿 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1927): 125.

distinguished translators with considerable scholarly and poetic credentials turned their attention to Byron and his oeuvre. Translation specialist Zhu Weiji 朱維基 (1904-1971) published a complete, unrhymed *baihua* translated of *Don Juan* in 1958.[91] Zha Liangzheng 查良錚 (1918-1977), prolific as a translator but better known by his *nom de plume* when writing original poetry, Mu Dan 穆旦, completed his rhymed, verse translation of *Don Juan* in 1966, though it lay unpublished until 1980, four years after the Zha's death.[92] Another famous Modernist poet, Bian Zhilin 卞之琳 (1910-2000), translated just "The Isles of Greece" for his *Selection of English Verse*, published in 1983, like Zha using rhymed *baihua* verse.[93]

The late-Qing *wenyan* translations of "The Isles of Greece"—Liang's, Ma's, and Su's—true to their reputation, contain a great number of "errors and omissions." Even in their finer moments, these translations seem to lend credence to Siguo's label of poetry translation as "separate creation" (see above); how can we distinguish between a translation proper and a composition based on, or inspired by, Byron's original? On the other hand, we are bound to some extent to take the translators seriously when they claim that their versions are "translations"—that they are bound by a duty of faithfulness (*xin*) to the original—a claim to

91 Zhu Weiji 朱維基, trans, *Tang Huang* 唐璜 (Shanghai: Shanghai yiwen chubanshe, 1978).

92 Zhou Yuliang 周與良, "Huainian Liangzheng" 懷念良錚, *Yige minzu yijing qilai* 一個民族已經起來, ed. Du Yunxie 杜運燮, Yuan Kejia 袁可嘉, and Zhou Yuliang 周與良 (n.p.: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe 江蘇人民出版社, 1987): 134.

93 This list is not exhaustive; many subsequent translations have been published, including by Liu Wuji 柳無忌, Gao Jian 高健, and Yang Deyu 楊德豫.

be considered that much more seriously in cases, like Liang Qichao's or Hu Huaichen's, where the English original appears alongside the translation, or where the translation is accompanied by an invitation to compare it with other versions. Furthermore, none of the translators after Liang is shy about borrowing language from previous translations that they feel is apt; Hu Shi's eighth stanza is openly modeled on Ma Junwu's version,[94] while Hu Huaichen's version contains much of the same language as Hu Shi's. Even as each subsequent translator makes countless artistic choices, their prefaces and marginalia make frequent reference to the inaccuracies of the previous versions: we have mentioned Liang Qichao's complaint that he could not always render the meaning accurately, while Ma Junwu expresses regret that Liang was not himself competent in English; Hu Shi refers to the shortcomings of previous versions as justification for their retranslations, while Hu Huaichen invites the reader to compare and decide for himself which he prefers. A model emerges of retranslation as a gradual refinement, a journey towards perfection, wherein infidelities constitute stumbles along the way. On the one hand, the "errors and omissions" often reflect the context of the translation, the political and cultural climate of the translators (themselves important authors).[95] On the other hand, even the least accurate of translations is an attempt to represent the original faithfully, and must be judged accordingly.

We have already considered Hu Shi as the progenitor of original *baihua* poetry and of

94 *Hu Shi riji quanji* 1.275.

95 See Liao Qiyi 廖七一, "Lun Ma Junwu yi 'Ai xila ge' zhong de 'e'" 論馬君武譯哀希臘歌中的訛 in *Zhongguo fanyi* 中國翻譯 27.4 (July, 2006) 27-31.

baihua poetry translation, but he was also the *wenyan* poetry translator to suggest the most promising possibilities for *wenyan* as a medium of translation. Hu Shi translated "The Isles of Greece" using the allometric meters of the *Songs of Chu* 楚辭, of which David Hawkes describes two: the "song style" and the "*sao* style." In the former, a line consists of two two- or three-syllables hemistiches with an unstressed filler syllable, *xi* 兮, dividing them. Thus, the song style couplet is: X X (X) *xi* X X / X X (X) *xi* X X, with the rhyme falling on the last syllable of each couplet. The *sao* style meter, named for the *Li sao* 離騷 which employs it, is like a double line of song style connected by a *xi*, however making use of other unstressed particles (marked 0) in between the hemistiches within each line: X X X 0 X X *xi* / X X X 0 X X, again with the rhyme on the last syllable of the couplet.[96] Some other parts of *Songs of Chu*, such as the "Hymn to the Orange" 橘頌, mix four- and three-syllable lines, ending with a "feminine rhyme": X X X X / X X X *xi*.[97] Hu Shi uses all of these in his translation, often mixing them together. The length of Hu's stanzas is quite variable, ranging from 44 characters (stanzas five and fifteen) to 62 (stanza one), with an average of about 51 characters per stanza. For comparison, the five-syllable verse chosen by Su Manshu and Hu Huaichen only allows 40 characters per stanza; Ma Junwu's stanzas range from 45 to 73.

Hu attributed the success of his translation in part to his scrupulousness and in part to the flexibility of the meter he employed:

96 See David Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u: Songs of the South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959): 4-7.

97 These diagrams and explanations are based on notes from Stephen Owen's History of Chinese Literature course.

> I spent four seasons' worth of energy translating this poem in its entirety, and I consider it to be superior to the translations of Ma and Su. One reason is that the form I employed is looser and more relaxed; another is that I didn't dare to omit anything of the spirit of the original, and I turned every which way to attain it. As for the meaning of the original, that goes without saying. Anyone who can read the original can know for himself that I am not just blowing my own horn.
>
> 此詩全篇吾以四時之力譯之，自視較勝馬蘇兩家譯本。一以吾所用體較恣肆自如，一以吾於原文神情不敢稍失，每委屈以達之。至於原意，更不待言矣。能讀原文者，自能知吾言非自矜妄為大言也.[98]

Yet there is more to the *Songs of Chu* meter than its flexibility; the repeated nonsense character *xi*, little employed in other styles of Chinese verse, adds an air of archaism, while any allusion to the *Songs of Chu* or *Li sao* immediately calls to mind the exiled, ill-fated poet figure, Qu Yuan. Aside from both meeting their deaths by drowning, Byron and Qu Yuan composed their great works during travels abroad—and by writing Byron's poem into the *Songs of Chu* meters, Hu may be suggesting that Byron is morally unimpeachable as well, cast out of a corrupt political system (Regency England) to die abroad. In his note to the fifth stanza, Hu writes,

> I particularly like this stanza. I feel it has a noble and sorrowful air. ... The second line, 'And where art thou, my Country?' can only be translated with the *sao* form, otherwise it cannot express the mood of calling to one's homeland and questioning it.
>
> 此章譯者頗自喜，以為有變徵之聲也。……。第二句原文： "And where art thou, my Country?"，非用騷體不能達其呼故國而問之之神情也.[99]

The *Songs of Chu* meters do more than allow a variable number of syllables and lines; they define a relationship to one's native land. Qu Yuan left the court of Chu to lament it in verse; Byron and the poet-speaker of "The Greek Isles" have a similar relationship to England and

98 *Hu Shi riji quan ji* 278-279.

99 *Hu Shi riji quan ji* 274.

Greece. Living abroad in New York City, Hu Shi could no doubt identify with all of these figures.

Hu Shi considered his translation of the fifteenth stanza to be the most successful of the entire piece:

> Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
> Our virgins dance beneath the shade—
> I see their glorious black eyes shine;
> But gazing on each glowing maid,
> My own the burning tear-drop laves,
> To think such breasts must suckle slaves.
>
> 注美酒兮盈杯！
> 美人舞兮低徊！
> 眼波兮盈盈，
> 一顧兮傾城；
> 對彼美兮，
> 淚下不能已兮；
> 子兮子兮，
> 胡為生兒為奴婢兮！
>
> (Pour the fine wine, ah, fill the cups!
> The beauties dance, ah, sentimentally!
> The light of their eyes, ah, brims over,
> One glance, ah, would topple a city;
> Facing their beauty, ah,
> My tears fall and I cannot stop them, ah;
> My dear, my dear,
> Why must your children be slaves?)

Hu's translation combines four lines of the song-style meter with two lines (lineated as four) of the *sao*-style. Throughout the stanza, we can see almost unavoidable traces of intertextual resonance with the Chinese tradition. The city-toppling glance, a commonplace in colloquial speech as well as literary language, has its origins in the song written by Li Yannian 李延年 praising his sister; when Emperor Wu of the Han 漢武帝 heard the song, he demanded to

meet the woman who inspired it:

> 北方有佳人，絕世而獨立。
> 一顧傾人城，二顧傾人國。
>
> In the north there is a beautiful lady; she stands alone in the entire age.
> One glance would topple men's cities, a second glance would topple men's nations.

Meanwhile, the description of the dancing maidens recalls similar topics from Song *ci* 詞. The reduplicative compound *yingying* 盈盈 (which I have translated "brims over") is used to describe a beautiful lady viewed from afar in one of the most famous poems in the tradition, the second of the Nineteen Old Poems 古詩十九首 ("Green are the grasses by the river" 青青河畔草). The seventh line (which I have translated "My dear, my dear," as it is an exclamation that includes the character *zi* 子, or child) is a quotation from the *Book of Odes*; it appears as a refrain in a poem number 118 (*Choumou* 綢繆). Such embeddedness in a tradition is what made May Fourth writers feel that *wenyan* was not a suitable mode for translation—these subtle allusions are the "scent of classical poetry," perhaps, for which *wenyan* is denigrated.

On the other hand, Hu's translation does more than just turn Byron's poetry into musty, old Chinese poetry, for his use of the Chinese tradition is also novel. The *Book of Odes* piece referred to, *Choumou*, which is conventionally understood as referring to marital harmony, can only signify ironically here: the speaker in Byron's original gazes at the maidens' breasts only to imagine the enslaved children they will some day suckle. Hu's

quotation *Zi xi zi xi* 子兮子兮 translates no part of Byron's original directly, but by alluding ironically to this poem in his translation of this stanza, Hu Shi manages to reproduce something of the horror that Byron's speaker felt by perversely conjuring the intertextual associations internal to the Chinese tradition.

Through intertextual illusion, Hu Shi is able to place two extremely divergent traditions into dialog. He has endeavored to use the poetic repertoire available to him to preserve the essence of the poem—its tone of elegiac reproach, its focus on the maidens' gaze, the scene of drinking and debauchery—to change what he had into what he lacked. Moreover, he translated the poem in such a way that it "resembled a poem," following a certain repertoire of formal conventions that had existed in China up to that point. The practice calls to mind an extremely provocative point from David Damrosch's *What is World Literature*, concluding a discussion on translations of Kafka: "For an American audience, a logical analogue to the Prague Jew would be the inner-city African American. ... The resources of Black English could very readily be employed to render Kafka's uses of in-group vocabulary and his dialectical spellings and contractions."[100]

The reason Damrosch's suggestion is so provocative is that European Jews and African

100David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003): 203.

Americans each possess histories of unique and irreducible traumas so horrifying that to compare them, at least to a self-consciously politically-correct American such as myself, is to violate their essential self-sameness. And yet, such an objection is not entirely different from objecting to poetry translation on the grounds that poetic usage is unique and particular to a given tradition, something which cannot be exchanged on any market for any price. Leaving trauma behind, the possibilities implied by Damrosch's suggestion to render Kafka in African American Vernacular English are limitless. If we are willing to accept that faithfulness is an impossible task and that no translation can ever be definitive, then we will not be offended by hearing Qu Yuan's voice coming from Byron's mouth.

Chapter 5
Iconicity

The Analog Poet: Hsia Yü Enters the Digital Age

"The serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity,
just because he is an expert aware of the changes in perception."
Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*

It goes without saying that the artist's tools influence the work that she produces. Scholars such as Michel Hockx have done excellent studies on online literary communities and the patterns of distribution and reception that characterize Chinese "web literature" (*wangluo wenxue*/*wanglu wenxue* 網絡文學/網路文學),[1] but there is also the question of how interacting with the computer as a writing tool influences the decisions made by the writer, an influence which may be highly personal and different in every case. Contemporary Taiwanese poet Chen Li 陳黎 (b. 1954), for one, published a collection in 2011, entitled *My City* (or *I/City*) 我／城, which he designed to be a "collective homepage" 一個集體的Homepage（家頁）.[2] His "postface" to the collection gives a good account of the relationship between poet and computer:

I probably started to use a computer to write starting in around 1993. As my creative tool

1 See Michel Hockx, "Virtual Chinese Literature: A Comparative Case Study of Online Poetry Communities," *The China Quarterly* 183 (Sep. 2005) 670-691; Michel Hockx, "Links with the Past: Mainland China's Online Literary Communities and Their Antecedents," *Journal of Contemporary China* 13.38 (2004) 105-127. See also Michael Day, "Introduction: Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Literature on the Internet," *Digital Archive for Chinese Studies Leiden Division*, 5 Dec 2003, web, 24 June 2013.

2 Chen Li 陳黎, "Houji: wodao/wocheng" 後記:我島／我城, *Wo/cheng* 我／城 (Taipei: Eryu wenhua, 2011): 231.

> transitioned from a pen to a keyboard and I spent each day staring at a Word document or web browser, the icons for cut, copy, paste, all the writing aids in the "tools" menu, the "insert" menu, the "format" menu, software like image browsers, sound players, or online translators...my creative process has also been influenced. ... Writing on a computer is convenient for editing, copying, and moving text, and for precise calculation and arrangement of the number of lines or words. Obviously it helps the writer experiment, to touch on new possibilities. ... Naturally, there are some influences which aren't so external or direct, which are more hidden, or which are internalized into a part of our way of thinking.
>
> 我大約從 1993 年左右開始使用電腦寫作，隨著創作工具由筆寫轉成鍵盤鍵入，日日面對「WORD 文件」或「網頁瀏覽器」上，剪下、複製、貼上……等圖示，工具列、插入列、格式列裡種種書寫輔助，以及圖片瀏覽器、影音播放器、線上翻譯等電腦軟體，創作方法自然會受影響。……電腦書寫易於修改、複製、搬動，精確計算、安排字數行數等特性，顯然有助於寫作者試驗、探觸新可能。... 自然，有些影響並不見得那麼外在、直接，而是比較幽微，或說已內化成為思考模式的一部分.[3]

In the Chinese case, the input method itself—the way keystrokes or touch-screen gestures are translated into characters by the software—may lend itself to certain operations. An obvious example is Chen's "A Love Poem I Mis-typed Because I Was Sleepy" 一首因愛睏在輸入時按錯鍵的情詩, which contains lines like: "I miss those wet songs we used to sing together lustfully" 我想念我們一起淫詠過的那些濕歌. (Our sleepy poet accidentally typed *yinyong* 淫詠 "sing lustfully" for *yinyong* 吟詠 "to chant" and *shige* 濕歌 "wet songs" for *shige* 詩歌 "poems.")[4] This poem was written in 1994, but its continued relevance is evidenced by its inclusion in the Chinese language section of the 2012 Taipei Secondary School Transfer Students Common Examination (with the question, "How many mis-typed

3 Ibid. 231-2.

4 The poet here was using a phonetic input method. Other methods of Chinese input would lend themselves to other kinds of associations. We will return to the question of Chinese language text input at the end of this chapter.

characters are there altogether?" 共按錯了幾個字？).[5] Chen Li's playful game alerts us to the interaction between user and machine, and to the ways that our limited control over machines can reflect our limited control over our own subconscious desires—in this case, the repressed sexual content of the love poem is made explicit.

As Chen mentions, computer writing is advantageous for editing, copying, and moving text—something it owes to its use of digital representation and storage, as opposed to the analog systems of the material world. The difference between analog and digital lies at the heart of the transition to a literature of the computer. "No two categories," writes Canadian communications theorist Anthony Wilden, "and no two kinds of experience are more fundamental in human life and thought than continuity and discontinuity, the one full, complete, compact, dense, and infinitely divisible, the other partial, intermittent, atomic, discrete, and not divisible beyond the individual units that make it up."[6] The distinction between continuity and discontinuity is realized in representational systems as analog versus digital: analog representations are continuous, a question of "more-or-less," whereas digital representations are discontinuous, a question of "either/or" or "all-or-none."[7] The implications of this difference for the dissemination of information are profound. Many attributes of spoken language make it by nature a digital system: continuous streams of

5 Chen Yapeng 陳雅芃, "Qingshi gaicuo ti dai xing anshi? Youren xiu youren ting" 情詩改錯題帶性暗示？有人羞有人挺, *Lianhe xinwen wang* 聯合新聞網, 28 July 2012, web, 28 June 2013.

6 Anthony Wilden, *The Rules Are No Game* (New York: Routledge, 1987) 222.

7 Ibid.

sounds are divided mentally into discrete phonemes characterized by distinctive features (voiced/unvoiced, long/short, etc.) which are understood by the human language faculty to be either present or absent. Written language no less is composed of discrete signs. Hence language may be repeated or recopied with perfect accuracy—at least, if it is the content which is desired. Once language is not only writing but a signature, not only speech but a voice, we are dealing in analog codes—continuous gradations of sound or form—and reproduction is no longer possible without experiencing some loss. One of the major effects of the so-called Digital Revolution, one whose ramifications are still playing out, is that all kinds of visual or sonic information, which had previously existed mainly in analog codings, are now coded digitally, such that the discrete units used ("samples") may exceed the limits of perceptibility. This means that not only is there no limit to the number of copies that can be made of an original (which had always been the case in printmaking, casting, etc.), but there is no limit to the number of generations of copies either. "From the photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints," argues Walter Benjamin; "to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense."[8] Hence mechanical reproduction is said to erode the aura of the original. But Benjamin overlooks the hierarchy between successive generations of reproduction: any print, in fact, loses something of the negative; and the print itself may not be copied without further loss. The digital image may be copied, and each of its copies may be copied—and never will any of the copies show any difference. In the computer age, there

8 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Shocken Books, 1969): 224.

is no necessary difference between original and copy *at all*.

Contemporary Taiwanese poet Hsia Yü (Xia Yu 夏宇, b. 1956)[9] has made a career of transforming copies into originals, whether through appropriation or parody, collage or misquotation. Her books are three-dimensional pieces of design such that the poems always lose something in transcription or re-printing; she makes a point of subtly improving each collection as it is reprinted, gesturing at uniqueness even in an immanently reproductive medium. Her works frequently bear the traces of her own imperfect handiwork, for instance in her cut-up and reassembled collection of collage poetry, *Friction/Indescribable* 摩擦·無以名狀 (1995), or otherwise in her primitivist paintings and drawings or off-kilter, blurry photography, which appear on book covers or on plates amid the text. Her interest in technologies of reproduction is an attack against notions of the poet as creative genius, but her obsession with the imperfect copy is an effort to introduce randomness, humanity, and subjectivity back into art. Yet as with other avant-garde gestures, for instance the demand to erase the distinctions between art and life or between high art and popular culture, the importance of this tension, its potential for generating shock, is premised on the very distinction it appears to transgress. There is no scandal in promoting the copy over the original if the two are indistinguishable—and this distinction is eroded with every further miniaturization of digital storage, every incursion of wireless networks into new territory,

9 I have chosen to romanize Hsia Yü's penname according to the Wade-Giles system rather than Hanyu Pinyin not only because the former is still very common in Taiwan, but because she signs her own written correspondence "HY."

every new handheld device embedded with microprocessors and capable of recording, storing, and transmitting images, texts, sounds, and movies. Digital media circulate with increasing disregard for time and space, even for virtual storage "space"; we already find ourselves in a world where Paul Valéry's prophesy has come true: "Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign."[10] It is possible that thanks to cellular smartphones and satellite signals, the availability of digital media has already exceeded that of clean water or heating fuel in terms of geographical reach.

Poetry as Icon

Ever since her first poetry collection, *Memoranda* 備忘錄, was published in 1984, Hsia Yü has stood at the forefront of experimental poetry in Taiwan. For contemporary Taiwanese critics, Hsia Yü has represented no less than the advent of the postmodern age in Taiwanese cultural production;[11] Xia's poetry has been noted for its "unabashed linguistic

10 Quoted in Benjamin 219.

11 See Lin Yaode 林燿德, "Jimu wantong" 積木頑童, *Yiijiusijiu yihou* 一九四九以後 (Taibei: Erya chubanshe, 1986): 127-140; Luo Qing 羅青, *Shenme shi houxiandaizhuyi* 什麼是後現代主義 (Taibei: Wusi shudian, 1989); Meng Fan 孟樊, "Taiwan houxiandai shi de lilun yu shiji," 台灣後現代詩的理論與實際, *Dangdai Taiwan wenxue pinglun daxi* 當代台灣文學評論大系 (Taibei: Zhengzhong shudian, 1993): 215-290; Liao Xianhao 廖咸浩, "Wuzhizhuyi de panbian" 物質主義的叛變, *Ai yu jiegou: dangdai Taiwan wenxue pinglun yu wenhua guancha* 愛與解構：當代台灣文學評論與文化觀察 (Taibei: Lianhe wenxue chubanshe, 1995): 132-171; etc.

terror[ism]" 不折不扣的恐怖[主義],[12] "philosophical anarchy" 思考的安那其,[13] and the "provocation [it] aims at the hegemony of written language systems" 將矛頭對準文字系統霸權的挑釁;[14] it has been described as "meta-poetry" 後設詩[15] or "deconstructive poetry" 解構詩[16] and drawn comparisons to Laozi, Zhuangzi, Chan Buddhism, Nietzsche, and Derrida.[17] Without ourselves resorting to similar hyperbole, we may still observe that Hsia Yü's poetic experimentation—her deployment of collage and procedural writing techniques, her playful appropriation of non-literary or popular textual elements, her penchant for concrete poetic forms—calls starkly into question popular contemporary assumptions in Taiwan and China about the figure of the poet (traceable to the May Fourth reception of Western Romanticism) and poetry (inherited from an even older lyrical tradition stretching back to the perennially cited formula, "The poem articulates what is on the mind intently" 詩言志,[18] from the *Book of Documents* 書經). Each subsequent collection has taken more risks and explored more fertile experimental ground, as *Ventriloquy* 腹語術 (1991)

12 Liao 169.

13 Ibid.

14 Lin 135.

15 Wan Xuting 萬胥婷, "Richang shenghuo de jixian" 日常生活的極限, *Shanggong ribao Chunqiu fukan* 商工日報春秋副刊, November 24, 1985.

16 Lin 138.

17 Lin 137.

18 Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992): 26.

incorporated an even more radically stream-of-consciousness style, interpolated images into the text, appropriated found texts, and even featured a poem made of original, meaningless Chinese characters; and *Friction/Indescribable* was composed by cutting up and reassembling *Ventriloquy*. 1999's *Salsa* (title in Western script) seemed to take a step back, employing mostly longer free verse forms without expanding on the compositional experiments of *Ventriloquy* and *Friction/Indescribable*. In 2007, though, Hsia Yü finally outdid herself, with a completely conceptual volume of "pseudo-poetry" or "non-poetry"[19] absolutely impossible to understand in terms of the Romantic subject or "the poem articulates what is on the mind intently," with the bilingual title *Pink Noise* 粉紅色噪音.[20]

The book itself, printed entirely on transparent celluloid,[21] is also bilingual: each of the thirty-three poems included appears first in English, left-justified and using black ink, and then on the following page in Chinese translation, right-justified and using pink ink. The material form of the book presents two immediate barriers to reading, first that without something opaque to place behind each page, the words appear as an impenetrable jumble (here we recognize the promised "noise"); second, that the celluloid itself, in addition to being transparent, is also highly reflective, meaning that the would-be reader must go to great

19 "A-Weng wen shi" in *Xianzai shi 04* (2006) 42.

20 Since *Pink Noise*, Hsia Yü has continued to publish collections that challenge boundaries: in 2010, she released two collections of song lyrics *This Zebra* 這隻斑馬 and *That Zebra* 那隻斑馬, both with unusual, avant-garde book design, and in 2011 she put out the collection *Sixty Poems* 詩六十首, which features a scratch-off cover so that each reader can design her own cover art.

21 Ding Wenling 丁文鈴, "Hsia Yü shiji Fenhongse zaoyin fangshui fangzaoyin" 夏宇詩集粉紅色噪音防水防噪音, *Zhongguo shibao* 中國時報, 16 Sep. 2007: A14.

lengths to avoid seeing bright lights or even his or her own face reflected back, instead of the words. It was these two features, above all else, that led one internet commentator to label *Pink Noise* "anti-reading" 反閱讀.[22] Then again, even when the reader has solved these two initial impediments, the text does not reveal itself readily. For one thing, the Chinese-speaking reader will find that these translations are quite unusual, almost unreadable; the reader discovers with the help of the explanation on the book's transparent plastic slipcover that the English poems in *Pink Noise* were translated into Chinese not by a human being, but by a computer program called Sherlock, which, needless to say, has made countless grammatical and lexicographic, not to mention idiomatic, errors, some of them quite hilarious. The English-speaking reader further finds that the English originals are rather strange, almost nonsensical themselves, and yet again we are informed by the slipcase that Hsia Yü did not write these herself, but rather assembled them out of texts she found on the internet—texts which, in most (though not all) cases, bore little resemblance to poetry in the first place. At this point we might well share poet A-Weng's 阿翁 exasperation when he asks, in an interview reprinted at the end of the volume's second edition, exactly what role Hsia Yü played in the composition of these poems. (Hsia Yü's response, "I found a form for them," will be discussed further below.) Hsia Yü's poetry had long challenged preconceived notions about poetic creation, but certainly never to this extent; even *Friction/Indescribable* had used source materials originally composed by Hsia Yü which were realigned not by chance (as in a

22 Xiaoxi 小西, "Fan yuedu de *Fenhongse zaoyin*" 反閱讀的粉紅色噪音, *Tianshi leyuan* 天使樂園, 5 Sep. 2007, web, 24 Jan. 2010, < http://angelland.negimaki.com/blog/?p=377>.

Dada cut-up or a John Cage acrostic) or by algorithm but very much according to the creative hand of the author. Yet here, eight years after Hsia Yü's previous poetry collection, is a book composed of mostly non-literary (and in many cases, semi-literate) found internet texts in English, translated into inept Chinese by an imperfect software translator, and printed on highly-reflective, highly-transparent celluloid. The first edition sold out quickly, but the response was lukewarm. Another blogger paraphrased Hsia Yü's gesture, "My love, I've made my poetry collection transparent! (And water-proof, moisture-proof, and insect-proof, three-in-one)" 親愛的，我把詩集變透明了！（而且防水、防潮、防蟲三效合一）.[23] Transparent, perhaps, but also impossibly opaque; not only water-proof, but reader-proof.

On the other hand, though, *Pink Noise* is a continuation of techniques and concerns that had long characterized Hsia Yü's work. Not only is this a striking book to hold and look at (Taipei's famous Eslite bookstore displayed *Pink Noise* under water, in a fish tank[24]), as Hsia Yü's previous, self-designed collections had also been, but it was also a kind of collage or cut-up, not unlike *Friction/Indescribable*. Even the concept of a transparent book whose text collides in three dimensions had occurred to Hsia Yü at the time she was producing *Friction/Indescribable*, when she came across the English word "palimpsest."[25] On a deeper

23 Haiyang 海揚, "Touming de baoli meixue—Xia Yu zuixin shiji *Fenhongse zaoyin* du hou" 透明的暴力美學－夏宇最新詩集粉紅色噪音讀後, *Xuwu zuochong* 虛無作崇, 4 Jan. 2010, <http://mypaper.pchome.com.tw/cloverfour/post/1293681261>.

24 Ding.

25 See "Nimao fumo" 逆毛撫摸, the preface from *Friction/Indescribable*. Ironically, she mistranscribes

level, *Pink Noise*'s interrogation of the unbalanced relationship between copy and original, here with respect to translation, is absolutely central to Hsia Yü's poetics quite from the beginning—for although the typographical alignment of the black original and the pink translation might lead us to expect them to complement each other perfectly, there is far too much noise, far too little correspondence (or far too much?) between them. So how should we approach the two sides of this book? Is the Chinese half of *Pink Noise* an imperfect copy of the English half, a degenerate appendage of the internet itself, that increasingly imperialistic realm whose lingua franca was, at the time of *Pink Noise*'s publication, unquestionably English? Or is the English half just a bunch of meaningless detritus assembled for the sake of producing a bizarre and amusing collection of Chinese poetry and included only for reference—especially given that most of Hsia Yü's readers would have better access to the Chinese side anyway? How, for that matter, does the English half relate to its own originals, the junk mail and internet forum discussions that served as its sources? Last, and perhaps most importantly, what does Hsia Yü mean when she says she gave the texts "form"? What understanding of poetry is being articulated through this work, and what is its status in the brave new world of digital media in which it participates as a kind of over-enthusiastic tourist?

Hsia Yü's poetry has always thematized mirror-image symmetry, the imperfect reproduction, the iconicity of printed language—all familiar attributes of photographic

"palimsest" as "palimsect [sic]," just as the project of *Friction/Indescribable* itself begins when she mistranslates the packaging of a French plumbing supply as "deaf to cold," confusing *soude* "weld" with *sourde* "deaf." This anecdote will receive further discussion below.

reproductive technologies—and after all, her major at National Taiwan University of Arts was film. In *Pink Noise*, Hsia Yü literalizes a model of the poetic page as a transparent frame, a kind of photographic negative or lantern slide—which may be infinitely projected, reproduced, or reversed, but never without some small imperfection—and she even prints her collection on the same material as film base, celluloid. "Cutting edge" though her poetry may be continue to be, the Analog Poet Hsia Yü now finds herself an anachronism in the digital age. Whereas in the time of the historical avant-garde, mechanical reproduction seemed to challenge fundamentally the concepts of authority, originality, and authenticity ("aura") that underlay the practice of artistic creation and reception for centuries before, the late 20th century has seen the onslaught of far more perfect reproductive technologies than ever before imagined. In retrospect, the emphasis of reproductive art is no longer the "signal", but the "noise"—the unwanted, unintended imperfections introduced by the act of copying —which, in light of completely exact duplicates, seems to recover the qualities art had lost.[26] Again and again in Hsia Yü's work, we see her locating the creative, the original, and the poetic in these failures to transmit accurately, even in *Pink Noise*, her first work to engage actively with the digital phenomena of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Our model of the frame of film helps to explain the kinds of characteristic operations Hsia Yü performs upon her texts. Unlike a page of a book, the frame of film may be turned

26 The emphasis on noise is similarly found in digital art, which may employ the characteristic forms of noise associated with digital media. Digital noise generally involves misinterpretations—headers treated as data, samples played at the wrong rate or bit depth—"mistranslations" in their own right. Many thanks to composer Dan Iglesia for discussing the technical aspects of digital noise with me.

over and viewed from behind, its constituent parts may not be excised or rearranged simply as with movable type, and it cannot be reproduced except with a degradation in quality. Our discussion will begin with Hsia Yü's attraction to reversal and symmetry, transformations that she often associates explicitly with motion picture film. Following that, we will discuss two strategies that contribute to the iconic or graphic modes of signification in Hsia Yü's poetry, collage and pictograph. Third, we will address Hsia Yü's approach to reproduction, especially in terms of translation as an inherently imprecise reproductive technology. The final part of the chapter will discuss Hsia Yü's encounter with the digital through *Pink Noise*.

The term "iconicity" which heads this chapter calls back to Charles Sanders Peirce's trichotomy, referring to a sign whose properties themselves allow them to signify. The original inspiration for approaching poetry in this way came from Maghiel van Crevel, who defines "iconicity" as the "mechanisms that allow form to contribute directly to content, which generally operate in poetry more than in prose and make form an icon of content rather than its more or less arbitrary stylization."[27] Hsia Yü's poetry perpetually highlights language's iconicity, through the kinds of operations and modes of reproduction she applies to her texts, to the point that the usual reference of the linguistic signs employed is willfully suppressed. On the other hand, the constant tension that drives her work derives from her refusal to cross fully into concrete poetry, with its fallacious suggestion that language can signify in a way that is other than arbitrary. Hsia Yü's poetry is still made of language, but her poems often sit at the uncomfortable boundary between written text and visual image.

27 Maghiel van Crevel, *Chinese Poetry in Times of Mind, Money, and Mayhem* (Boston: Brill, 2008): 240.

Transparency, Symmetry, and "the Opposite Side"

Hsia Yü's sideline career as a pop lyricist led in 2008 to a collaboration with songwriter Li Duanxian 李端嫻 (a.k.a. Veronica Lee) on a musical adaptation of manga artist Jimi's 幾米 *Turn Left, Turn Right* 向左走.向右走 (subtitled in English *A Chance of Sunshine*). Hsia Yü's pop lyrics, which she publishes under the names Li Gedi 李格弟, Tong Dalong 童大龍, and others, are often quirky if not particularly unconventional, and generally do not take the risks of the poetry she publishes as Hsia Yü.[28] One of the numbers in *Turn Left, Turn Right*, however, intersects surprisingly with the concerns of Hsia Yü's poetry. The song, called "A Reel of Black and White Film Suddenly Starts to Play Backwards" 一捲黑白影片突然開始倒著播放, features a female protagonist yearning to go back in time to when the male protagonist still loved her. The chorus goes, "You know I still love you/ Sounds so simple/ I know you don't love me anymore/ Sounds so ordinary" 你知道我還愛你／聽起來是多麼簡單／我知道你已經不愛我／聽起來更平凡.[29] The wish to go back in time, however ordinary, raises a major theme of Hsia Yü's poetry through the imagery of the verses: the reversibility of the projected image. The scenes described in the song are

28 This is not to say there is not an interesting argument to make comparing her two bodies of work, published under different pen names though they are. Her 2010 collections *This Zebra* and *That Zebra* both make use of the same kinds of avant-garde book design as her poetry collections to anthologize Hsia Yü's pop lyrical output.

29 Audio and lyrics of the song are visible on Youtube: Wei Ruxuan 魏如萱 (perf.), "*Yijuan heibai yingpian turan kaishi daozhe bofang—Jimi yinyueju* Xiang zuo zou xiang you zou" 一捲黑白影片突然開始倒著播放-幾米音樂劇《向左走向右走》, *YouTube*, 6 May 2013, web, 24 June 2013.

standard candidates from the stock footage bin for backwards motion: a shattered bottle reconstitutes itself, a rose returns to the bud and grows backward into the seed, rain falls up. The song closes with an explicit statement of its nostalgia for lost potential: "We go back to innumerable beginnings, those young, restless mornings" 我們回到無數個開始，那些個年輕激烈的早上.

Judging from her works, the film medium holds much fascination for Hsia Yü, and she associates it consistently with temporal or spatial reversibility: a reel of film may be played forward or backward, right-side-up or upside-down, correctly oriented or reversed right-to-left. If "A Reel of Black and White Film Suddenly Starts to Play Backwards" unambiguously prefers going backwards over going forwards, Hsia Yü's poetry more often presents the two halves of a mirror-image as an undecidable enigma. One of the poem cycles that appears in *Ventriloquy*, "Secret Conversations with the Animals" 與動物密談, contains a poem describing a perfectly symmetrical movie theater:

> Secret Conversation with the Animals III
>
> regarding the reverse side.
> in a large theater capable of holding several hundred million people
> many flights of stairs lead to the unknowable dark rows
> seats go in every direction one after another above the stairs every seat
> holds someone watching a movie a giant screen
> hangs in the center of the theater the film being projected
> is called "The State of Things" the other side of the screen
> also has countless stairs countless seats
> countless people sitting just like this side
> all watching the same movie reversed
>
> 與動物密談（三）

關於反面。
一座可以容納數億人的大劇院裡
階梯成幾何級數往不可知的黑暗排列
階梯上一個女一個橫生的座位每個位子
都坐滿了看電影的人一面巨大的布幕
懸掛在劇場中央放映的片名
叫做「事物的狀態」布幕的另一面
也如同這一面有著無以計數的階梯
無以計數的座位無以計數的人坐著
在看同一部反面的電影[30]

The four poems in "Secret Conversations with the Animals" comprise a very loosely connected sequence, unified more by the repetition of certain words and phrases and a matter-of-fact tone of description than by subject matter, form, or the speaking subject, who drops in and out at will. The introductory phrase "regarding", which introduces the topic here, contributes to the large-scale structure of the poem as it appears several other times in the sequence: "regarding Greece" 關於希臘, "regarding the thermometer" 關於溫度計, and "regarding disloyalty" 關於不忠. The scene that "regards" the "reverse" (*fanmian* 反面, "opposite side") here is that of an enormous, perfectly symmetrical movie theater holding millions or billions of viewers, half of whom see the movie normally on one side of the screen, and half of whom see its mirror image on the other side of the screen. The theater is large enough, the subject of the film ("The State of Things") generic enough, that the theater could easily function as a figure for the whole world. The question that remains is the same one that has long plagued viewers of reflections: given that the sides are identical but opposite, which side to prefer? Which is the *recto*, the 'right' side (*zhengmian* 正面), and which is the *verso*, the opposite, the reversal (*fanmian*)? Which half of the population sees the

30 *Xia Yu shiji: Fuyushu* 夏宇詩集：腹語術, 2nd ed., (Taipei: Xiandai shi, 2007): 17.

correct (cor-rect) State of Things, and which half sees things ass-backwards?

In *Zhou Mengdie's Poetry of Consciousness* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), Lloyd Haft argues that symmetrical, palindromic forms create a certain undecidability, a leveling of hierarchies: as in the story alluded to by Taiwanese poet Zhou Mengdie's 周夢蝶 pen name, does Zhuangzi dream he is a butterfly, or does the butterfly dream it is Zhuangzi? The same principle certainly applies in Hsia Yü's case. Consider the poem "Allegory" 寓言, also from *Ventriloquy*:

> on his birthday he discovered an unfinished
> allegory stuck at the end of the third paragraph but it was already clear
> this was an inaccurate allegory in
> the second paragraph he discovered he didn't know what to do
> this embarrassing allegory lingered every day
> within three feet of his head he pulled down the brim of his hat popped
> his collar and crossed the street through the rain everybody sensed it nobody else
> knew what to do either 42 years old
>
> the night before they lifted the newspaper ban he tried out in his poems
> some politically sensitive words really? really? from now on we
> can freely and without restraint use the word
> 'teapot'?
>
> at the movie theater exit two men who had slept with
> the same prostitute in different rooms
> held onto their girls and exchanged
> a deep glance
>
> 生日那一天發現一則還沒完成的
> 寓言停留在第二段的末尾但早已肯定
> 是一則不準確的寓言在
> 第二段就發現了不知如何是好
>
> 如此一則尷尬的寓言每天徘徊在
> 頭頂三尺之內他把帽沿拉低衣領
> 豎起冒雨過街眾人察覺了眾人
> 亦不知如何是好 42 歲

報禁解除的前夕在詩裡試探著
敏感的字眼真的嗎真的嗎從此我們將
可以肆無忌憚地使用「茶壺」
這個字眼了嗎

電影散場的出口　兩個曾在不同房間
嫖過同一個妓女的男子各自
挽著他們的女人交換了
深沉的一瞥[31]

There several cases of self-reference within this poem, where the poem seems to be describing itself: "the second paragraph," where the "he" of the poem, himself a poet, "discovered he didn't know what to do," is in this poem the place where the poet finds himself stymied by the possibility of using "politically sensitive words"; "the end of the third paragraph," said to be the location of the poet's "inaccurate" allegory, here describes a scene otherwise unrelated to the first two verse paragraphs which could very well be allegorical. The translation "allegory" is only one possible rendering of the Chinese word *yuyan* 寓言, which can mean "parable" (as in *langzi huitou de yuyan* 浪子回頭的寓言　"the parable of the prodigal son") or "fable" (as in *Yisuo yuyan* 伊索寓言 *Aesop's Fables*). Literally, *yu* 寓 means to dwell or live in temporarily, and by extension, to imply or suggest, in the sense that one speaks of one thing temporarily in order to imply another. In the context of the Taiwanese newspaper ban (*baojin* 報禁) mentioned in the poem,[32] we presume that the poet must use allegorical language to discuss topics too sensitive to treat directly—though of course Hsia Yü does not reveal what that subject might be, choosing as the "sensitive" word the poet looks forward to

31 *Xia Yu shiji: Fuyushu* 10.

32 Restrictions on the publication of newspapers imposed by the Nationalist government were in effect in Taiwan from 1951 until January 1st, 1988.

using nothing more significant than "teapot." Examining the supposed allegory, we can guess why the poet "didn't know what to do": we see two couples leaving a movie theater in perfect symmetry, each man eyeing the other as he holds onto his own girlfriend. However it is not just what transpires at this scene that creates the mirror image, but what has happened previously; the two men each "slept with / the same prostitute in different rooms," which is apparently the reason for the "deep glance" that now serves as the axis of symmetry. Each man jealously guards his own girlfriend while regarding the other man with suspicion, but both are guilty of the same infidelity. Which man, if either, betrayed the other? Which has any right to be suspicious? Is this undecidability the reason the allegory is "incorrect" and "embarrassing"? Once again, the mirror-image situation is associated for Hsia Yü with film, in this case only the movie theater setting, which provides another axis of symmetry between the two couples: they have both just finished watching the same movie. We might wonder if the movie they saw was called "The State of Things," and if they perhaps sat on opposite sides of the theater.

The consideration of the opposite point of view, the view which sees everything backwards, figures on an interpersonal level as well. In Hsia Yü's poignant "Dancing Away from You" 背著你跳舞, a poem addressed by a heart-broken female speaker to her former lover, the speaker's actions, erratic though they are, are consistently oriented away from the addressee.[33] The Chinese phrase *beizhe ni* 背著你, which I have translated in the title as

33 *Xia Yu shiji: Fuyushu* 60.

"away from you," literally means, "with my back turned to you," or "facing away from you." In all the action of the poem, the speaker keeps her back firmly in the direction of her ex, the "you" in the poem. She walks on an island, looks at hanging vines, feels guilty, puts on a copper ring, goes into exile, wanders, cries, laughs out of turn, etc., always "away from you," *beizhe ni*. The poem helps us to understand the interpersonal implications of the reverse: the side we show when we want to say we don't care but really do, the effort to ignore the one thing we are fixated on, the return of the repressed, the sign that betrays the opposite of what it is meant to signify. Yet when Hsia Yü recycles the poem in *Friction/Indescribable*, along with some other fragments that will be familiar to us here, she carries the act of negation to an absurd extreme.

> Absolutely Won't Lead to Any Misunderstandings
>
> the afternoon you turned away from the ocean and came to see me
> you turned away from me
> turning away from you
> regarding the reverse side
> a reverse movie turned away from it
> you turned away from you
> turning away from me
> turning away from your reverse side
>
> 絕不引致任何嫌隙
>
> 你背著海來看我的下午
> 我背著你
> 背著我
> 關於反面
> 一部反面的電影 背著它
> 你背著你
> 背著我
> 背著你的那些反面[34]

34 *Moca/wuyimingzhuang* 摩擦·無以名狀 (Taibei: Tangshan, 1995): n.p.

The two figures in the poem turn away from each other, from other things, even from themselves. We picture two people, turning in circles, discovering that "away" is never "away" enough. We turn and look the other way, only to find that what we have been avoiding is already avoiding us. It is clearly no coincidence that the phrases "regarding the reverse side" and "a reverse movie" from "Secret Talk with the Animals III" find their way into the poem, as both poems deal with the politics of inversion, of negation. Yet where the effect of the main source text, "Dancing Away from You," is a kind of pathos induced by the compulsive repetition of the act of avoidance, "Absolutely Won't Lead to Any Misunderstandings" takes the pathetic and repeats it, enlarges it, until it reaches absurdity. If turning one's back to someone betrays emotional investment even as it performs indifference, the act of assembling a passage like "you turned away from you / turning away from me / turning away from your reverse side" creates ironic indifference out of sincere emotion. Is the title, "Absolutely Won't Lead to Any Misunderstandings" 絕不引致任何嫌隙, similarly ironic? Or does it refer to the unambiguous "no" of the indiscriminate negation?

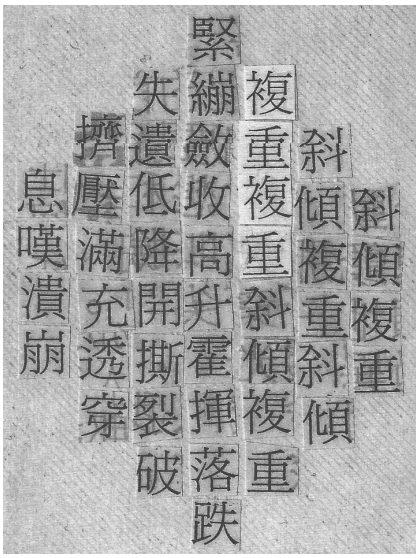

Figure 1. "Walking from 1 to 2" 由 1 走向 2.

So far the examples we have considered treat symmetry thematically, without attempting to represent it formally. When Hsia Yü takes her interest in reversal to the formal level in "Walking from 1 to 2" 由 1 走向 2 in *Friction/Indescribable* (see figure 1), she does not simply create a palindromic poem, but makes use of inversions to undermine our very practice of reading. The poem appears in a roughly hexagonal shape, the line lengths increasing by two characters every line until line four, the poem's midpoint, and then decreasing by two characters every line until the seventh and final line. Hsia Yü arranges the poem so as to be bilaterally symmetrical: not only are lines on either side of the fourth line equal in length, each line has an equal number of syllables above or below a line passing horizontally through the center of the poem (the text in *Friction/Indescribable* runs vertically). Yet the sense of symmetry goes even one dimension further: every word in the

poem is a two-syllable compound whose syllables are reversed. Thus, instead of *qingxie* 傾斜 "to slant," the poem uses *xieqing* 斜傾, which is not an existing compound word in Chinese. This trick renders the poem untranslatable, if not quite totally unreadable; the effect is not dissimilar to writing "poundcom" instead of "compound" or "versere" instead of "reverse." The major problem this technique presents is what direction to read—either we read in a conventional direction (top to bottom, right to left) and reverse each word as we read it, or we must read in a totally unconventional direction (bottom to top, right to left) so that the words make sense as written. But if we are going to read in a direction other than the usual one anyway, how can we rule out a third choice—bottom to top, left to right—which also gives us legible words? Or top to bottom, left to right, which produces non-words just as our conventional direction of reading would? Here we find the exact dilemma presented by the mirror image in "Secret Talk with the Animals," but reflected along two axes instead of just one; by leaving the direction of the text undecidable, Hsia Yü has truly written a two-dimensional poem, where line breaks serve to produce lateral contiguity instead of merely standing for signposts along unidimensional, unidirectional stream of text. Deciding how to translate the poem is an interesting question, because however we do it, we must determine to read the words one way or another, a decision which is deferred by the Chinese original. As a tentative solution, I suggest the following: translating the mirror image of the poem (read from bottom to top), and then flipping the entire translation left-to-right.

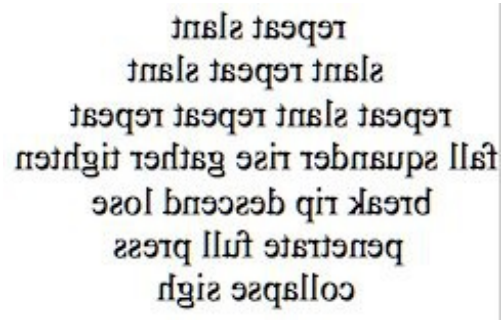

Figure 2. "Walking from 1 to 2," provisional translation.

The reason the direction matters, the reason we are unwilling simply to declare the poem bidirectional, is that trends appear in the poem along the various axes. Line four seems to be the crux: we have two pairs of opposites, namely "rise" and "fall" and "gather" and "squander." But are we falling after rising too high? Or picking ourselves up after a fall? Are we squandering what we carefully gathered? Or painstakingly recouping what we foolishly threw away? Moving to line five, does the rip/break occur after tightening too far, or after descending too far? By leaving one dimension of the reader's traversal of the poem uncertain, Hsia Yü has created a legitimately two-dimensional poem, a poem whose symmetrical printed shape is not only iconic, as in concrete poetry, but structurally significant to the meaning of the words and the poem as a whole. What Hsia Yü manages to do in "Walking from 1 to 2" is take the two-dimensional undecidability that she developed in "Secret Talk with the Animals III" and "Allegory" and apply it to the very practice of reading. Hsia Yü's textual practice, in its more revolutionary moments, touches on what Leon Roudiez calls "paragrammatics": "any reading strategy that challenges the normative referential grammar of

a text by forming 'networks of signification not accessible through conventional reading habits' is paragrammatic," cites Craig Dworkin.[35] We will see more examples of Hsia Yü's avoidance of simplistically iconic visual elements later on.

Collage

The collage technique of *Friction/Indescribable* has precedent in the Chinese cultural tradition, as well as in the tradition of the historical avant-garde. In light of the Chinese tradition, Hsia Yü half-jokingly compares her project to the allusive literary practices of Chinese literati in her postface to the 2008 edition of *Ventriloquy*, saying, "You could say every word [in *Friction/Indescribable*] has its source,"[36] which is how the Qing dynasty *ci*-poet Wang Pengyun 王鵬運 praises the *ci* 詞 of Wu Wenying 吳文英, the *shi* 詩 of Du Fu 杜甫, and the *wen* 文 of Han Yu 韓愈. Needless to say, allusion in the works of these authors serves very different purposes from Hsia Yü's solipsistic self-reference, but it always bears repeating that postmodern intertextual practices are not entirely new phenomena.[37] Perhaps the better comparison is with Li He 李賀 (790-816), the greatly eccentric and ill-fated poet of the Tang who is reported to have ridden around on a donkey scribbling couplets on scraps of paper which he would assemble into complete poems only later.[38] Then again, since Li

35 Craig Dworkin, *Reading the Illegible* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2003): 12; see also Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984): 256.

36 *Xia Yu shiji: Fuyushu*, 3rd ed. (Taipei: Xia Yu chuban, 2008) 123.

37 One could even say, with a wink, that China "has had that for ages" 古已有之.

38 Li Shangyin 李商隱, "Li Changji zhuan" 李長詰小傳, *Li Shangyin quanji* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji

He's couplets had no original context in advance of their eventual assembly, perhaps they resemble mosaic tiles more than collage fragments. Other precedents exist in the visual arts: Robert Harrist relates that Yan Cheng (fl. mid-sixteenth century) collected a funeral epitaph written by Zhu Yunming (1461-1527) on a hanging scroll; he was uncomfortable displaying it due to its subject matter, but he appreciated the calligraphy, so he cut it up and remounted it as a small album.[39] Like Hsia Yü, Yan Cheng cut up his original to change its form, make it smaller, broadly speaking to change the manner or context in which it was consumed. But the more important similarity lies deeper. Harrist points to the tendency to separate visual form from semantic content in Chinese calligraphy appreciation: "The denigration of meaning is a cornerstone of early calligraphy criticism and theory."[40] Though the anecdote about Yan Cheng illustrates the difficulty of such a split, Hsia Yü's cutting and pasting assert the same preference for visual form over semantic content attributed to traditional calligraphy criticism. The constant tendency in Hsia Yü's poetry is towards the visual icon: graphically significant and untranscribable, the logo, the pictogram. Her most severe maneuver in this direction is "Séance III" from *Ventriloquy*, a poem composed as a collage of printed Chinese characters (see figure).[41] Again we can return, for comparison, to the

chubanshe, 1999): 209-10.

39 See Robert E. Harrist, "*Book from the Sky* at Princeton: Reflections on Scale, Sense, and Sound," *Persistence/Transformation: Text as Image in the Art of Xu Bing* (Princeton: P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for East Asian Art, 2006): 34.

40 Ibid. 33.

41 Examination of the characters involved has led me to conclude that the source for the cut-up is the table of contents of *Ventriloquy* itself.

Dadaists, specifically their sound poetry (such as Ball's "Gadji beri bimba" or Schwitters's *Ursonate*), though Hsia Yü's medium of choice is much more usually the visual rather than the sonic.

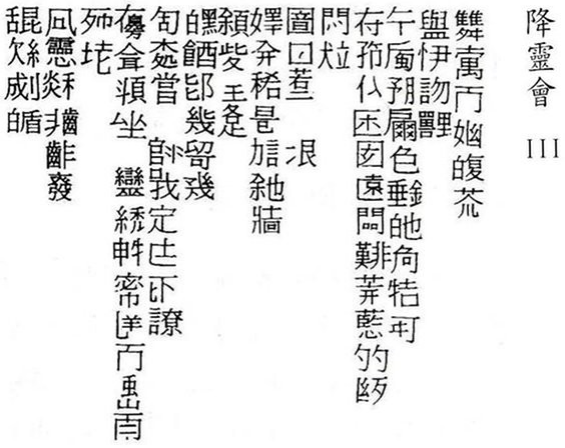

Figure 3. "Séance III," from *Ventriloquy*.

Hsia Yü's original characters are notable for following, more or less, the graphical syntax of the Chinese character: the pieces of the characters are legitimate (since they are dissected from legitimate Chinese characters), they are mostly arranged in ways that are theoretically possible, and for the most part they fit the same rectangular format that all printed characters must fit. "Séance III" begs for comparison to *Heavenly Writing* 天書 (1988),[42] the highly controversial work by Hsia Yü's far more famous, far more notorious

42 The work's title is more commonly translated *Book from the Sky*, a rendering that completely overlooks the common usage of *tianshu* to mean writing (not necessarily a book) so lofty as to be unintelligible by regular folks.

mainland contemporary Xu Bing 徐冰 (1955-). For *Heavenly Writing*, Xu invented many thousands of original, meaningless Chinese characters, carved them into printing blocks, and proceeded to create a multivolume set of meaningless books. Xu's work touched an extremely sensitive nerve in China, where the written character is itself an icon for Chinese cultural uniqueness.[43] Xu Bing's characters were invented by the artist to have no meaning, but they all *could* have been real characters (some of them, in fact, turned out to be rare or variant forms attested in odd corners of the textual record), whereas, in a move that sets her quite apart from Xu Bing, Hsia Yü makes no attempt to pass her characters off as genuine. Portions are off-kilter (seventh row from the right, first character from the top) or out of proportion (eleventh row, fourth character; eighth row, third character); in creating the collage, she rotates certain fragments so that component lines' thicker and thinner sections are in the wrong places, suggesting that the lines were written or inscribed in the wrong direction (fourth row, third character; sixth row, second character). Whereas Xu Bing's *Heavenly Writing* adheres completely to the proper technique of Chinese calligraphy and the woodblock printmaking style derived from it, Hsia Yü cuts her characters off from their handwritten forebears. The effect is similar to that of Roy Lichtenstein's *Brushstroke* series, which parodies the hyper-individualistic painterly gestures of the abstract expressionists by reproducing abstract brush strokes in Ben-Day dots, the printing technique employed for newspaper cartoons. The calligraphy behind Xu Bing's *Heavenly Writing* may be intended for

43 See Perry Link, "Whose Assumptions Does Xu Bing Upset, and Why?", *Persistence/Tranformation: Text as Image in the Art of Xu Bing* 47-57.

reproduction, but it is still produced by the hand of the author and bears his personal, absolutely individual mark. Where the characters of *Heavenly Writing* were originally written, then carved onto blocks and printed, "Séance III" is cut and pasted from industrially printed characters whose ultimate origin in hand-written language is foggy at best. While Xu Bing has built his original characters from the most individual building blocks, his own brush strokes, Hsia Yü assembles hers haphazardly from the readymade, the anonymous.

The Missing Pictograph

As we have seen in poems such as "Séance III" and "Walking from 1 to 2," Hsia Yü is interested in the graphic potential of the written word. Although in this regard she is no doubt influenced by her Francophilia—one of Guillaume Apollinaire's most famous calligrams is "Il pleut" ("It Rains"), or translated into Chinese, *Hsia Yü* 下雨, homophonic with Hsia Yü's pen name—the indigenous Taiwanese tradition of concrete poetry includes works by notable poets such as Lin Hengtai 林亨泰, Bai Qiu 白萩, Zhan Bing 詹冰, and others. Where Hsia Yü's visual practices diverge from this group's, indeed from those of many concrete poets, is in her resistance to what Umberto Eco has called the "iconic fallacy," defined by Caroline Bayard as the fallacy that "a sign has the same properties as its object and is simultaneously similar to, analogous to, and motivated by its object"—essentially a Cratylic view of language.[44] Although Hsia Yü has composed straightforwardly concrete

44 *The New Poetics in Canada and Quebec: From Concretism to Post-Modernism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 24, qtd. in Perloff, "Writing as Re-Writing."

poems (part one of "Record of an Inflatable Movie Theater" 記一座充氣電影院 grows gradually longer line by line, receding slightly with each new stanza, ideographically suggesting inflation in three "puffs"[45]), she elsewhere adopts a more sophisticated stance to the relationship between image and text.

Figure 4. "The Missing Image," from *Ventriloquy*

"The Missing Image" 失蹤的象 from *Ventriloquy* interrogates the very signifying potential of images, by interpolating images into a text that is itself a reflection on the relationship between image and text in producing meaning. Hsia Yü begins with excerpts

45 "Ji yizuo chongqi dianyingyuan" 記一座充氣電影院, *Xianzai shi 03* 現在詩 03 (2005).

from a passage from Wang Bi's 王弼 (226-249) commentary to the *Yijing* called "Explaining the Images" 明象. The basic text, with the word "image" preserved, reads as follows:

> Since the words are the means to explain the images, once one gets the images, he forgets the words, and, since the images are the means to allow us to concentrate on the ideas, once one gets the ideas, he forgets the images. . . . Therefore someone who stays fixed on the words will not be one to get the images, and someone who stays fixed on the images will not be one to get the ideas. The images are generated by the ideas, but if one stays fixed on the images themselves, then what he stays fixed on will not be *images* as we mean them here. The words are generated by the images, but if one stays fixed on the words themselves, then what he stays fixed on will not be *words* as we mean them here. If this is so, then someone who forgets the images will be one to get the ideas, and someone who forgets the words will be one to get the images. Getting the ideas is in fact a matter of forgetting the images, and getting the images is in fact a matter of forgetting the words. Thus, although the images were established in order to yield up ideas completely, as images they may be forgotten.[46]

The hierarchy suggested by Wang Bi is that words are an aid to understanding images, and images are an aid to understanding concepts; neither has any value in itself. Hsia Yü alters the text by substituting a small image, aligned with the text, every time Wang Bi uses the word "image." By replacing some of the words in Wang Bi's commentary with images, Hsia Yü suggests a way to test his hypothesis: do we understand better when the word 'image' is replaced with an actual image, which is supposedly closer to the meaning that we hope to understand? Hsia Yü immediately faces a problem: what would an image of "image" look like? Abstract categories cannot be represented pictographically except through metonymy, through specific members of the category; rather than represent the category "images," Hsia Yü can only give us individual images. Hsia Yü further confuses the matter by choosing as images, as representatives of the category "images," images that are clearly meant to denote

46 Richard John Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 31-32.

something *else*—they are all simplified and idealized pictograms designed to be easily translatable into one word. Thus we see cat, turtle, snake, dinosaur, alligator, crab, penguin, whale, chick, ladybug, flower, pineapple, bench, purse, triangle (the musical instrument), and kettle. The pictograms continue spilling along the edge of the page after the poem has ended: flowerpot, piano, matchbox, ladder. Finally, at the left-hand edge of the margin, Hsia Yü includes an image quite unlike the others, a sketch of Aldo Rossi's 'La Cupola' coffee maker standing next to the Florence Cathedral whose dome is evoked by Rossi's design. Apart from the sketch of La Cupola, the images are all of a piece; in their familiarity and recognizability they resemble the kinds of public information symbols put into use in airports, parks, and other public locations where simple ideas must be communicated quickly and effectively to speakers of various languages. Thus Hsia Yü has upped the ante even further: perhaps images cannot depict abstract categories unambiguously, but they can communicate certain kinds of information even to people of different linguistic backgrounds. Does "The Missing Image" therefore promise a return to the time before the Tower of Babel?

The utopian vision of communication in images that Hsia Yü finds in Wang Bi and then takes to her own absurd extremes quickly begins to unravel, starting first from the title. The character I have been translating as 'image,' *xiang* 象, has a second meaning, 'elephant,' which would turn the title of the poem into "The Missing Elephant." Hsia Yü elsewhere expresses her amazement at similarly strange instances of polysemy, for example the English word 'fudge': "how can it how can it it's not only / soft candy it's also nonsense also a stamp

also it can dodge?" ("Séance II"). Not only that, the character is even a pictograph for 'elephant,' one of the very small proportion of Chinese characters that do indeed have their origins in pictographs, and in a strange sense it is thus not at all out of place among the turtles and cats in the poem. In this case, we realize that, although our text includes a turtle, a snake, a dinosaur, a cat, etc., there is no elephant to be found. Just as when we read looking for the word 'image' and found only images, we read looking for an elephant and find only other things. The wordplay involved, moreover, can only make sense in Chinese characters, in language; no translation of the poem could have both an image *and* an elephant that are missing. The cultural specificity of linguistic signs, at last, is shown to apply just as much to images in the sketch of Rossi's coffee maker, which in its Italian context recalls the cupola of a cathedral. If we don't know what 'cupola' means, if we haven't seen an Italian Gothic cathedral, the allusion is lost. In the end, the failure of "The Missing Image/Elephant" to communicate its meaning clearly is Hsia Yü's refusal to put any more faith in the signifying potential of images than she does in words. Hsia Yü's poetry may exploit the iconicity of the written word, but it is not pictographic.

Translation as Reproduction

Now we may return to the issue that began our discussion, reproduction, and in particular a kind of reproduction that is almost guaranteed to be imperfect: translation. Hsia Yü's interest in translation long predates *Pink Noise*. *Friction/Indescribable*, the predecessor

work to which we have already returned again and again for the conceptual seeds elaborated in *Pink Noise*, appears to have begun with an act of mistranslation. Hsia Yü recounts finding a discarded package of something like plumber's putty while living in France. Reading the instructions on the package, she confuses *soude* and *sourd* and misreads "weld [*soude*] when cold" as "deaf [*sourd*] to cold," a phrase which excites her for three hours before she realizes her mistake. Her disappointment that something cannot be "deaf to cold" after all blends into her sadness at the passing of the Provençal summer and the advent of autumn, which in turn inspires the existential examination that leads her to wonder why the poems she had written in her life were *those* poems and not *other* poems. This act of self-reflection, in turn, is what inspires her to cut her previous collection, *Ventriloquy*, into pieces and assemble it anew.[47] For Hsia Yü, the mistranslation is infinitely more interesting, poetic, inspiring than the correct translation; the loss of accuracy is, it turns out, a gain.

Hsia Yü's explanation of *Friction/Indescribable* and its origins are consistent with a view of life and personality as contingent, transient. Her effort to edit her poetry collection retrospectively (something she does regularly when new editions come out, though never as radically as in this case) is a way to explore the potential alternative realities that could have come to pass, if only one or two small details had been different. She describes her thought process in rambling prose:

> Because it was autumn I discovered that my discomfort towards pretty much all of the poems I had written was because I wasn't able to write them any other way. I thought I too maybe wan't the person writing these words it's just the envelopes of the letters got switched so you

47 "Nimao fumo," *Friction/Indescribable* n.p.

> miss all those chance encounters just barely and you would never know whose reincarnation you were.
>
> 因為是秋天我發現對我寫過的詩我差不多都是不安的因為我沒能把它們寫成另一種樣子。想想我原也可能不是我現在這樣寫著字的這個人只要同時寄出的兩封信 裝錯了信封一切因緣際會稍稍錯失你就再也不知道你是誰的輪回轉世.[48]

Her solution is to dissect a copy she has handy of *Ventriloquy* (whose large printing format, she felt, "took up too much space"[49]) into words and phrases and then reassemble them into new poems. *Friction/Indescribable* takes the failure to reproduce accurately as its beginning and end: it is a "re-write" of *Ventriloquy* that preserves nothing substantial of the original, and one whose ultimate form is a two-dimensional photocopy of the three-dimensional collage which replicates its uneven arrangement and the bleeding of text from the reverse side of the cut-up, while failing to reproduce the subtle gradations of light and shadow of the textured, three-dimensional page (introducing more contrast: a hallmark of the photocopy). In other words, the text of *Friction/Indescribable* is not only an imperfect copy of *Ventriloquy*, the physical book itself is an imperfect copy of another physical item, the original collage, copied not as text but as image (icon), and subject to the attendant inaccuracies of the analog reproduction of images. And the 'original' sin that gave birth to these copied and re-copied works of art was an act of failed translation, a failure to reproduce the meaning of a found text as it passed from French to Chinese.

Hsia Yü's reproductive writing techniques have an unintended consequence.

---

48 *Friction/Indescribable* n.p.

49 Ibid.

Although Hsia Yü takes the poems in *Ventriloquy* and "writes them [some] other way," the effect on *Ventriloquy* itself is ironically to fix it even more firmly in place as a collection. In the postface to the 2008 revised edition of *Ventriloquy*, Hsia Yü explains,

> Facing my old works, I can never resist the urge to revise, but *Ventriloquy* can't be revised, because every word in the subsequent *Friction/Indescribable* 'has its source'; every word and line were cut and pasted from *Ventriloquy*. I couldn't even change the font, or else *Friction* can't stand on its own, or it could stand but it would become a different book, a different thing.
>
> 面對舊作我總無法克制改寫的衝動，但是《腹語術》無從改起，因為之後的《摩擦無以名狀》可謂無一字無來歷，字字句句均由《腹語術》剪之貼之。
> 連字型也改不得，否則摩擦一書完全不成立，或者成立，但變成另一本書另一回事.[50]

To alter the original after the copy has been made, she says, would be "to go back to the past and rewrite the future."[51] But wasn't Hsia Yü's original intention to turn one set of poems into another, precisely to rewrite the future/present? Wasn't the entire idea to turn *Ventriloquy* into "a different book, a different thing"? Has the reversal in value of the copy and the original progressed to such an extent that the original now depends on the copy for its life—that the original must now be preserved in order to maintain the integrity of the copy—that the copy demands faithfulness from the original, rather than the other way around?

Critic Wan Xuting addressed Hsia Yü directly about the status of the original and the copy in an interview from 1988, asking,

50 *Xia Yu shiji: Fuyushu*, 3rd ed., 123. Ultimately she changes elements of the design: the cover image, the fonts for poem titles.

51 Ibid.

> It's thought that modernism emphasizes innovation, originality, emphasizes the status of the *original*; postmodernism is the loss of originality, so it attempts to restore the status of the *copy* and emphasizes imitation, reproduction, and allusion. The principle element that strikes people so much about your poetry is that you don't avoid *cliché*, and you create new meaning by imitating, by alluding to *clichés*. This is a postmodern paradox: making the copy from the original. How do you feel about this?[52]

Hsia Yü's reply sheds considerable light on the status of translation in her work. As "the most famous example of making an original out of a copy," Hsia Yü cites not Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* or Duchamp's *LHOOQ* but Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*, which Ionesco had been inspired to write by the style and content of his English language textbook. Ionesco felt that the dialogs in his textbook were really theater, and he began composing the play by simply copying them down. Hsia Yü, inspired to study French by Ionesco article "The Tragedy of Language," which describes the composition of *The Bald Soprano*, has her own epiphany when the characters in her French reader (*Le français et la vie*) go to see a play—which turns out to be *The Bald Soprano*. As the fifteen students in her French class recite the lesson one by one and then together, she alone laughs to herself. "I suddenly understood some very secret things, about people, about language, about form, about life. 'At that moment, I saw the light'" 我突然懂了一些非常神秘的東西，關於人，關於語言、形式，關於生命。「就在那個時刻我看到了光。」[53]

Yet while Hsia Yü casts *The Bald Soprano* as a parodic, 'postmodern' copy, her interpretation is problematic. Though the play may have begun as an act of plagiarism,

52 Wan Xuting, "Zhi wei ziji er xie" 只為自己而寫, *Xiandai shi* 現代詩 12 (July 1988): 31, italicized words in English/French in original.

53 Ibid. 32.

Ionesco explains that, as he wrote, the text seemed to change of its own accord:

> A strange phenomenon took place, I don't know how: the text began imperceptibly to change before my eyes, and in spite of me. The simple, luminously clear statements I had copied diligently into my schoolboy's notebook, left to themselves, fermented after a while, became denatured, expanded and overflowed. The repartee which I had, in careful and precise succession, copied from the primer, became a jumble.[54]

What had been incontrovertible, factual formulas ("The week has seven days") became absurd, impossible statements ("Mr. Smith, my hero, now proposed that the week consisted of three days, namely: Tuesday, Thursday, and Tuesday"[55]). What changed between the original and the copy was not just the number of days in the week, but, more importantly, Ionesco's realization of language as the mechanically-recited vehicle of accepted truths. "The text of *The Bald Soprano* or of the English (or Russian or Portuguese) Primer, composed of ready-made expressions and the most tired clichés, made me aware of the automatic quality of language and human behavior, 'empty talk.'"[56] In a sense, then, *The Bald Soprano* is not at all unlike much of Hsia Yü's poetry in its deployment of clichéd language or situations—but it is not at all the reversal in status of copy and original that Wan Xuting had asked about. For one thing, *The Bald Soprano* is not really a copy, something that Ionesco himself clarifies; second, the critique contained within the play is of "speaking because there is nothing personal to say, the absence of inner life"—precisely of the copy as evacuated of authenticity,

54 Eugène Ionesco, "The Tragedy of Language: How an English Primer Became My First Play," trans. Jack Undank, *The Tulane Drama Review* 4:3 (Mar. 1960): 12.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid. 13.

of the "universal petty bourgeoisie" as a bunch of copies.[57] Along with Hsia Yü's misunderstanding (intentional or otherwise), the ultimate conclusion she draws is also significant: where Ionesco sees "the tragedy of language," its evacuation and ultimate meaninglessness, Hsia Yü says she "felt completely the comedy of language" 完全感覺到的，卻是「語言的喜劇」.[58] "Isn't it that we exist in a certain age, within certain relations or forms, just so that we can express the irony of that age's relations and forms? Is this a comedy or a tragedy?" 是不是我們處身於某一個時代，某一個關係或形式裡，只是為了表達對那個時代關係和形式的反諷呢？這是悲劇還是喜劇呢？[59]

Here, as in *Friction/Indescribable*, the priority has reversed from original to copy, with the peculiar phenomenon that, in fact, our criteria have not changed at all. Whereas once we may have looked to the original work of art for authenticity and creativity, now we find exactly those qualities in the copy, whose imperfections are valued as exactly the kind of innovation and originality we find missing from most works of art. Hsia Yü does not level the distinction between original and copy so much as ascribe the alleged qualities of the original to the copy. This reversal depends, as we have said, on the inexactness of the copy—in other words, it depends on analog technologies of reproduction. But what happens to the original and copy when the distinction has really worn off—that is, in the digital age?

57 Ibid.

58 Wan, "Zhi wei ziji er xie" 32.

59 Ibid.

Poetry in the Age of Digital Reproduction

Hsia Yü's second conceptual collection, 2007's *Pink Noise*, is *Fiction/Indescribable* in the digital age. Like *Friction*, *Pink Noise* is the result of an operation performed on a 'found,' or pre-made text. In this case, though, Hsia Yü has mechanized the work considerably: the original text(s) are culled from English-language websites (and one French), and the operation—translation into Chinese—is performed by a software translation tool, the Apple program Sherlock.[60] The resulting translation is printed alongside the original on transparency, the English in black and the Chinese in pink, creating a visual cacophony on the page. In fact, the idea of printing on transparency had occurred to Hsia Yü while she was deciding on a form for *Friction*, but she ultimately used drawing paper for that project "because of Cézanne (in the end perhaps I saw myself as an oil painter)" 為了塞尚的緣故（最終我可能把自己當油漆匠看待）.[61] For *Pink Noise*, the author figure Hsia Yü identifies with has changed considerably. When asked in an interview by fellow poet A-Weng 阿翁 for *On Time Poetry* 現在詩 what exactly her role in all of this was, Xia explained:

> I found a form [for them]. The form of the poems and the form of the parallel translations; I

60 Suggestively, Apple was accused of copying another program, Karelia Software's Watson, in the course of the development of Sherlock. Watson, in turn, was a program meant to complement Sherlock ("Watson Developer Speaks Out Against Apple; Plans Port To Windows" in *The Mac Observer*, 28 July, 2002, retrieved 22 Jan. 2010,

<http://www.macobserver.com/tmo/article/Watson_Developer_Speaks_Out_Against_Apple_Plans_Port_To_Windows/>). Did Watson copy Sherlock, or was it the other way around?

61 "Nimao fumo," *Moca/wuyimingzhuang*, n.p.

> kept finding sentences to throw to the translation software and then selected, cut, and pasted them after they came out. I cut and pasted, but it was all in the computer, not like *Friction/ Indescribable* when I used scissors and an Exact-O knife and waited for a gust of wind to blow the sentences in my face. Also, I watched the gears turn. I love watching the gears turn.
>
> 我找到詩我找到形式。詩的形式與雙語對照的翻譯形式。我不停找句子。找句子與句子相連時的音樂性, 我用的還是剪貼，但都在電腦?，不像“摩擦無以名狀”用剪刀、美工刀還不時等著一陣風把句子吹來。 還有我看著齒輪轉動。我喜歡看齒輪轉動.[62]

Whereas as recently as 1999, Hsia Yü was still a poor typist who did not own a computer,[63] she has now completely computerized her operation. From oil painter running wild across the canvas Hsia Yü has evolved to a very different model of authorship: a shaper of raw material (a sculptor), a combiner of voices (a conductor), a collector and processor of data (a scientist), an appreciator of kitsch (a collector), a recycler of refuse (a dumpster-diver). Using ready-made material attacks the notion of author as creative genius, no doubt, but it also raises her to a higher order, as an organizer, a manager. In the beginning, the earth was without form, and void. And Hsia Yü said, let there be form.

But it is not only the creation of *Pink Noise* that challenges us—it is its production, and its reproduction. Between 1999's *Salsa* and 2007's *Pink Noise*, the world changed considerably. In that time, music, text, and images went from embodied, material things to be sold, possessed, and re-sold, to fully dematerialized digital "media" existing increasingly in only a virtual space from which they may be borrowed ("licensed") for consumption, or simply given away illegally or at the expense of the minority of users who are willing to pay for "premium" service. The reduction of a book to an infinitely reproducible digital text no

62 "A-Weng wen shi."

63 *Salsa* (Taipei: Xia Yu chuban, 1999): 143.

doubt came as a blow to Hsia Yü, whose books were always to be coveted as much as physical, artistic objects as they were to be enjoyed as a specific embodiment of an abstract poetic text. *Pink Noise* is Hsia Yü's response to the digital age: not only in that it borrows material from the characteristic textual productions of the internet, but also in that it approaches technologies of reproduction with a nostalgic longing for the days of the imperfect copy—the photographic print or the cassette tape—which, though perhaps lacking the uniqueness of a hand-made work of art, does take on an 'aura' of individuality when compared with the exact replications made possible by digital media. Even further, *Pink Noise* is a deliberate protest against the economics of the circulation of digital media, a *detournment* of the very modes of textual production in the internet age for a decidedly retro work of conceptual art.

In many ways, the text of *Pink Noise* is the internet in miniature: alongside more-or-less canonical works of high or pop culture (Walt Whitman's "When I heard the learn'd astronomer" in "How soon and unaccountably I became tired and sick," Philip Larkin's "Aubade" in "I simply love people too much so much it makes me feel too fucking sad," a bizarre/hilarious line from Song of Solomon 5:4 in "I've always been told to remember this," a poem by the young Karl Marx in "We erect our structure in the imagination before we erect it in reality," Kurt Cobain's suicide note in "I simply love people too much"), we find an invitation to subscribe to a mailing list ("I am an expert in nothing"), a chain letter ("This has been sent to you for good luck"), blog posts by anonymous authors ("We were extremely

charming yesterday—and we'll be even more devastating today"), an interview with Nick Hornby ("I simply love people too much"), a forum discussion about Japanese erotic toys ("They're back they're sad they're talking about making a porn movie" and "I used to think that it wasn't good to write so often"), and (needless to say) an advertisement for lesbian porn ("How soon and unaccountably I became tired and sick"). None is given any special preference or priority—we merely see the the record of one user's browsing, the things that jumped out at her, lined up and indistinguishable from each other. The edges that served as boundaries between cut-up fragments in *Friction* are erased; pasted into a word processor document, each source text's original context disintegrates, leaving only its ghostly suggestion behind. The internet does not cite sources (Wikipedia notwithstanding), its authors are anonymous, its sutures seamless.

A second important feature of text on the internet is something so familiar to us by now that is easily forgotten: hypertextuality. Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), the basic programming language of the World Wide Web (a protocol that had become nearly synonymous with the internet by the late-1990s), is built on the possibility of creating nodes of contiguity (links) between multiple "pages," which allow instant transit from text to text. As we mentioned above, Hsia Yü had considered the hypertextual possibilities of a transparent book during the writing of *Friction/Indescribable*.

> I discovered the word "palimpesect [sic]," which is a kind of sheepskin which can make hidden writing reappear with the help of a special chemical solution. Baudelaire used it as a metaphor for memory. A feminist said, "but her thumbprint will emerge."[64] Because of

64 Elaine Showalter said that in feminine writing, behind the dominant plot, "another plot ... stands out in

> people like Baudelaire and Roland Barthes and all kinds of whatever-isms, I wanted terribly to use an architect's transparent vellum to print this poetry collection. I was thinking that the possibility of layers upon layers of insinuation and misinformation—maybe next to the fifth line of the first page you would see the seventh line of the eighth page, I was thinking other people would say this was "cross-referential"—was a bit exciting.
>
> 發現一個字叫做 Palimpesect，一種羊皮紙可藉特殊藥水重現隱匿的書寫。波特賴爾用來隱喻記憶。女性主義說「但她的大拇指印浮現」。為了波特賴爾和羅蘭巴特和種種什麼什麼主義的關係，我極想極想用一種建築師用的透明繪圖紙印這本詩集，想想那層層疊疊含沙射影指鹿為馬的可能性——你可能在第一頁第五行旁邊就看見了第八頁的第七行，想想別人又要說這是「互相指涉」——令人有點高興.[65]

The kinds of collisions dreamt of by Hsia Yü do not quite happen, either in *Pink Noise* or in the World Wide Web which first implemented hypertext on a large scale. But Hsia Yü is attracted to the "insinuation and misinformation,"[66] the confusion and mistakenness, that could result from random textual contiguities.

A third important feature of the internet text is disposability. In a medium where nearly everything is preserved, it turns out that nothing is worth preserving. Thus poorly-written pages in desperate need of copy editing may disappear without ever attracting more than a few dozen visitors, only to live on as zombies in search engine caches or, failing all else, on The Internet Archive "Wayback Machine."[67] Of the source texts in *Pink Noise* that are lost,[68] there is the very brief and peculiar "They always liked each other again soon":

---

bold relief like a thumbprint." See "Writing and Sexual Difference," *Critical Inquiry* 8.2 (Winter 1981): 204.

65 "Nimao fumo," *Friction/Indescribable* n.p.

66 Hsia Yü's original uses two four-character idioms, *hansha sheying* 含沙射影, (literally "spitting sand on a shadow") or spreading groundless rumors, and *zhi lu wei ma* 指鹿為馬, literally "pointing at a deer and calling it a horse."

67 <http://www.archive.org/web/web.php>.

68 I have not systematically determined the sources of all poems in the collection. Given the nature of the

They always liked each other again soon just as they did before
This only made them like each other all the more
That's because it often rained without measure
They did so only when it poured

If I may interject a personal anecdote, when I first read "They always liked each other again soon," I was utterly perplexed by the way all four lines rhymed (provided that "measure" is read with the stress on the wrong syllable in line three) but had such wildly different meters, and in particular by the completely absurd first line, with its repetitive and contradictory adverbial phrases ("always," "again," "soon," "just as they did before"). Who could produce a line of poetry like this? I turned to Google—not because I felt confident that the source texts of *Pink Noise* were all on the internet, but more as a kind of learned reflex in the digital age, out of a belief that any sentence, any line of text, would exist somewhere on the internet if it existed in the world at all. (Here I am reminded of poet Kenneth Goldsmith's axiom: "If it doesn't exist on the internet, it doesn't exist.") Sure enough, the search turned up an online poetry quiz designed to test "general poetic knowledge."[69] One of the questions asked the reader to choose the final line for a poem, so that the line would rhyme and scan with the rest of the poem. The four choices were the four lines of "They Always Liked Each Other Again Soon"—rather than four successive lines of a poem, which is how Hsia Yü presents them, they were four independent options. However, by the time I performed the search (even by the time *Pink Noise* was published), the original page was "Not found," and in its

source material, it is likely that their availability online is in a state or more or less constant flux.

69 "What's Your Poetry IQ?", *Poetry.com*, 2004, 28 June 2013, <http://web.archive.org/web/20040115043939/http://www.poetry.com/Iq/Index.asp?Suite=A36402>.

place, Google returned several personal websites whose authors had seen fit to reproduce the quiz in its entirety along with their results.

This experience, I believe, exemplifies the economy of textual circulation that *Pink Noise* engages with: the worthless, ephemeral text, circulated limitlessly but only valuable at the moment of encounter and immediately discarded afterward (the internet quiz), is copied into a print context and circulated in a far more limited, far more expensive form. Once upon a time, the story would have stopped there. Compare, for instance, Kenneth Goldsmith's work of conceptual writing *Day*, a complete transcription of the *New York Times* for September 1, 2000, published as a book. One kind of printed text becomes another kind of printed text; money changes hands (mostly moving away from the poet, it should be noted), prestige is gained, a line is added to a résumé or bibliography, perhaps an article or dissertation chapter is produced on the subject, and the poet moves on to his next work. In 2007-09, however, the story continues: immediately back onto the internet, where bloggers and discussion forum users take up the text, reproduce it in part, discuss it at length. Obviously the original text has transformed in the process, not only moving from a low-brow to a high-brow context, but, interestingly, from an English-speaking to a Chinese-speaking context. In the meantime, the original site has expired and disappeared. *Pink Noise* is a stick in the spokes of the economy of internet texts, a deliberate anachronism which allows Hsia Yü to pursue artistic goals that are not compatible with contemporary media or their monetization.

The Poet in the Machine: Hsia Yü and Sherlock

In an essay for the program of a 1989 show at the American Museum of the Moving Image called "Hot Circuits: A Video Arcade," American poet Charles Bernstein described what he called "the experiential basis of the computer-as-medium."[70] The use of the computer is based around "the *prediction* and *control* of a limited set of variables," such that computers are characterized by "invariance, accuracy, and synchronicity." Ideally, computers are a tool perfectly lacking in agency: they can only respond in predetermined ways to the input given by the user. Yet, Bernstein writes, "the computer only simulates a small window of operator control. The real controller of the game is hidden from us. . . . We live in a computer age in which the systems that control the formats that determine the genres of our everyday life are inaccessible to us."[71] Obviously, Bernstein's reading of the computer as a medium is based on a certain idealized, reductive understanding of computer behavior: twenty-some years later, we might choose to characterize our interactions with computers more by their unpredictability, their failure to perform as expected or demanded, their imprecision and unreliability; or, conversely, we might focus on the utter eclecticism and ephemerality of the content they provide and distribute, their potential to overturn existing structures of authority on the informational playing field.[72] If the idealized computer and its

70 Quoted in Marjorie Perloff, *Radical Artifice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997): 187-188.

71 Ibid.

72 Cases such as those of Julian Assange and Edward Snowden, the "human flesh search engine" 人肉搜索引擎 in China and the misadventures of Reddit and 4chan users attempting to identify the perpetrators of the

idealized network convey information in terse, predictable messages free from ambiguity or interference ("noise"), certainly our experience of the internet twenty-five years later is characterized not by the absence of noise but by its presence writ large, its ubiquity, to the point that the noise and the message are not only indistinguishable, but that we suspect the message itself might be merely noise to begin with.

Literary scholar William Paulson, in his work *The Noise of Culture: Literary Texts in a World of Information*, describes literature as a special kind of communication that "*assumes* its noise as a constitutive factor of itself,"[73] something outside the simple passing of information from sender to receiver. Certainly, in a world increasingly characterized by media that attempt to transmit a message directly and without interference (advertising, product packaging, signs and instructions, brief electronic transmissions such as text messages or microblog posts), the quality of literariness may be located more and more in deviations from the communicative ideal, in the "noise" that interferes with communication. No surprise, then, that familiar aspects of literature appear to us in the various noises and failures of communication in our electronic media: for instance, the word soup of spam e-mails that attempt to circumvent filters that would identify spam by virtue of its getting to the point too quickly (for instance by actually using words like "Rolex," "Zoloft," "penis enlargement," etc.). It was in this mess of confused and disposable electronic messages that Hsia Yü began to assemble the texts that would become *Pink Noise*, but it was the operations she subjected

Boston Marathon Bombings all come to mind.

73 Quoted in Perloff 187.

these fragments to next that would truly test claims about noise and poetry.

To compose the Chinese half of *Pink Noise*, Hsia Yü translated her found English texts into Chinese with the help of Sherlock, a program primarily designed as a search tool, which formerly came bundled with Mac OS. Quite bafflingly, (the theoretical possibility of) translation is still cited by linguists as evidence that, as disparate as human languages are, they all fundamentally "mean the same thing."[74] Yet the extreme difficulties involved in machine translation, that is, translation by means of a software algorithm, may be regarded as evidence that any potential common denominator among languages is at the very least highly elusive and potentially limited. It is clear that Hsia Yü approached Sherlock not with the hope that it would produce correct, idiomatic translations of her source text into Chinese, but rather that it might produce something more or less, something new and suggestive. She was not disappointed. "When he (my mechanical poet) is right," she says, "he's righter than right, and when he messes up, he's as wrong as could possibly be" 它（我的機械詩人）對的時候它比對還對它糟的時候也再沒有更糟的了.[75] Not only is the machine "wrong" at least some, if not most, of the time, even when it is "right," it is

74 French linguist Claude Hagège says as much in a recent blogged article on nytimes.com. The claims are so utterly confounding as to be worth quoting at length: "There exists an important activity which clearly shows that even though the ways languages grasp the world may vary widely from one language to another, they all build, in fact, the same contents, and equivalent conceptions of the world. This activity is translation. Any text in any language can be translated into a text in another language. These two texts express the same meaning. We can therefore conclude that despite the differences between the ways languages grasp the world, all languages are easily convertible into one another, because humans interpret the world along the same, or comparable, semantic lines" ("Q and A: The Death of Languages" in *Schott's Vocab*, 16 Dec. 2009, retrieved 24 Jan. 2010 <http://schott.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/12/16/q-and-a-the-death-of-languages/>).

75 "A-Weng wen shi."

somehow "righter than right," an acknowledgement that even a translation that is technically correct might not produce the conventionally expected result, a phenomenon which (for Hsia Yü) is even better than the conventionally correct translation. Thus Sherlock deviates from "invariance" and "accuracy" and, as a result, produces something resembling intelligence, even personality, as opposed to the dumb predictability of the ideal computer. Here Hsia Yü begins referring to Sherlock in increasingly personal terms, first as "mechanical poet" and soon as "mechanical lover." The word "software," which in Taiwanese Mandarin is translated *ruanti* 軟體 ("soft body") as opposed to the more literal Mainland term *ruanjian* 軟件("soft *ware*"), takes on an organic, even erotic overtone. Hsia Yü has found the poet in the machine; its name is noise.

When Ding Wenling reviewed *Pink Noise* for the *China Times*, she asked Hsia Yü what pink noise was. Hsia Yü told her to go on the web and look for herself (no one has any right to claim ignorance if an internet connection is nearby—"Let me google that for you" or LMGTFY has become a common sarcastic response to unnecessary questions in online discussions). Ding learned that pink noise is a kind of "noise that can cover up ambient conversation." The definition is imprecise, to be sure, as indeed internet research characteristically substitutes cultural associations or functional applications for definition. Neither is the specific resonance appropriate here: *Pink Noise*, far from covering up ambient conversation, saves it, molds it, repackages it, and contributes to it. "I found a form for them": pink noise, no matter what it *does*, *is* a kind of noise whose frequency spectrum has

been shaped in a particular way. Unlike white noise, which contains all audible frequencies at the same amplitude (and hence sounds harsh), pink noise is white noise filtered at the rate of 3dB per octave, thus skewed towards lower frequencies ("pink" by analogy to light with more low-frequency components than high-frequency components, while white light like white noise contains the entire spectrum in equal measure). Hsia Yü has not cancelled out the idle chatter; she doesn't silence it, she shapes it and promulgates it.

Hsia Yü gathers the noise around her, harmonizes it, molds it; where other poets working in Chinese are making poetry *on* the internet, Hsia Yü has made a poetry *of* the internet—and perversely decided to circulate it as an old-fashioned physical object. *Pink Noise* also rebels in another way: at the same time as Hsia Yü frames the Chinese language itself, setting it off against English and French, she chooses a Chinese so confused and corrupted as to be almost ridiculous. Hsia Yü has never particularly emphasized her national or ethnic identity, preferring to associate herself with an international (primarily Western) panoply of avant-garde artists—Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Beuys, Jenny Holzer, et al. *Pink Noise* is her first collection after returning to Taiwan from France, and on one level it dramatizes the act of migration that preceded it. *Pink Noise* betrays an outsider's attitude to Chinese: if we can see anything by overlaying the originals and their translations, it is the gaps and fissures that emerge when we translate ourselves and our experiences from one language to another. No wonder, then, that *Pink Noise* should show us our own faces when we are not careful. On a larger level, *Pink Noise* gestures at the troublesome, emergent

inequalities that plague the digital realm, implicitly asking who gets to read originals, and who has to read bad translations. It is the Chinese half of *Pink Noise* that is relegated secondary, derivative, feminine (pink) position, and there is historical as well as literary cause for this fact: yes, Hsia Yü valorizes the incorrect translation as poetic, but at the same time, the original junk mail and advertisements for porn that inspired the project were in English. Is Hsia Yü a tourist on the English-language internet, or is English, in some sense, the internet's native language? Why does Hsia Yü choose to avoid the Chinese-language internet (the majority of whose users and content would not be Taiwanese and do not write in traditional characters)? Whether the advent of the internet age is—for language, for languages, for poetry—a comedy or a tragedy is still unclear.

Postscript:

The Future of Chinese: Form and Information on the Chinese Computer

In 1982, Zhu Bangfu 朱邦復 (a.k.a. Chu Bong-Foo), the Taiwanese inventor of the first Chinese-language computer input system and the "father of Chinese computing," wrote a book explaining the stakes of introducing the Chinese language to digital machines. The book covered everything from the basic elements of binary math to much broader concerns. For Zhu, the computer's "importance is far greater than the automobile, the airplane, the battleship, or the atomic bomb. Why? Because it is the crystallization of culture!"[76] The computer's potential for coding and transmitting information constitutes its greatest

76 Zhu Bangfu, *Zhongguo diannao mantan* 中國電腦漫談 (Taibei: Quanhua keji tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 1982): 60.

advantage, but also its greatest threat, as information that resists coding will be forever left outside. Zhu's take on Chinese history—in terms of a stagnation that caused China to fall behind the West—is familiar, except that he places the blame specifically on communication technologies:

> The strength or weakness of a nation, the rise or fall of a people, is determined solely by its level of knowledge. As the ancients said, "Over ten years, you can grow trees. Over a hundred years, you can grow people." People's behavior is determined by their ideas, and people's ideas are determined by their knowledge. Looking back on history, the reason China suffered such decline was because new knowledge could not be spread. This led to antiquated, closed-minded thinking, and as a result, we were left on the outside of the modern age. Going a step further, why couldn't new ideas spread widely? For one reason only! The lack of modernized tools for communicating and applying knowledge; without those tools, efficiency was minimal, and thus matters were obstructed and unrealizable.
>
> 國家的強弱，民族的盛衰，端視其知識水平而定。古人有言：「十年樹木，百年樹人」，人的行為決定於觀念，人的觀念決定於知識 縱觀歷史，我國所以積弱不振，乃新知識之不能普及。知識不普及導致觀念陳舊閉塞，因果相循，自棄於時代之門外。再若進一步探究，為何知識不能普及？無他！傳播知識運用知識之現代化工具缺乏，工具缺乏則效率極低，效率極低則窒礙難行.[77]

According to Zhu, without a Chinese computer—and not merely a computer that can display Chinese characters, but one which is operated according to Chinese grammar[78] (this was before the days of graphical user interfaces)—Chinese-speaking people risk allowing English to supplant Chinese in government agencies and places of business. In this scenario, a person without English-language skills, says Zhu, would be qualified to do nothing except perhaps write martial arts novels, and even those would probably need to be translated into English.[79] And lest the reader imagine that such an eventuality might not be so bad, since

77 Ibid. n.p.

78 Ibid. 22.

79 Ibid. 23.

after all the Chinese people had once given up their long robes for Western-style shirts and suits, Zhu disagrees:

> I believe that no matter past or present, Chinese or foreign, self-respect is a constant in human nature. Could our generation really give up the ghost to such an extent? Is it possible? Even a "mud bodhisattva" can thrive in the right environment.[80] We living people with given and family names, a glorious history, and the resolution to strengthen our nation in the present, could we abandon our own mother tongue? Abandon our own ancestors? And lay the blame on our traditional written characters? I can very seriously tell you, absolutely not! And I would wager all I own that the twenty-first century will be the golden age when Chinese culture blankets the entire globe!
>
> 我相信古今中外，要面子是人性之常，我們這一代能夠不爭氣到如此地步嗎？可能嗎？連泥菩薩都有"土"性，而我們活生生的人，有名有姓的人，有過光輝燦爛的歷史，也有奮發圖強的現在，我們能放棄自己的母語？放棄自己的祖先？而歸咎我們的傳統文字？我可以鄭重地告訴個位，絕對不然！而且我敢用我所擁有的一切賭個東道，廿一世紀將是中華文化廣被全球的輝煌時代！[81]

The chauvinistic turn in Zhu's argument should not outweigh the very serious warning it contains: the technical ability to "informationalize" (*zixunhua* 資訊化 or *xinxihua* 信息化) a language or kind of data will completely determine its continued existence. If a linguistic message cannot be made into information—coded into the correct *form* or *format*, the "inform" in "information" meaning originally "to give shape, to describe"—then it cannot be communicated in the computer age. And if it doesn't exist on the internet, it doesn't exist.

Zhu's viewpoint exhibits a characteristic Occidentalism which divides the world into two categories: Chinese and foreign (Western). The crisis he felt was the overwhelming of Chinese culture by Western culture, something to be brought on all the more quickly by changes in information technology. Thirty years later, the status of Chinese in the digital

80 A "mud bodhisattva," according to a saying, can barely preserve itself, let alone help others.

81 Ibid.

realm is no longer an issue: according to an internet marketing research group, in 2010 Chinese ranked second behind English and far ahead of number three Spanish.[82] The questions that remain have much more to do with what viewpoints may be expressed, what information shared and with whom, now that public discourse in Chinese has erupted into the digital domain. Hsia Yü's *Pink Noise* does not present an optimistic picture of the possibility of real dialogue between opposing viewpoints. It's fine to insist on the ludic "comedy of language," but there are times when "insinuation and misinformation" are not merely play, but sources of actual harm.

82 Internet World Stats <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>

Conclusion

Poetry and Praxis

You believe that there is beautiful freedom in front of you

I completed this dissertation in 2012-13, while living in Hong Kong, a city whose reputation as a "cultural desert" seems quite well established, if not entirely well deserved. However, unlike Taipei, which was also my home during part of this work's writing, Hong Kong has no cafe culture to speak of and very little in the way of independent bookstores; even the opening of a branch of Taiwan's Eslite 誠品 bookstore in Causeway Bay was a major news item last fall. And yet this is the city which reminded me that poetry can still speak to pressing issues in the real world, that it promises some hope for change, that it belongs on the streets as well as on the page.

Since the city's handover in 1997, Hong Kong's residents in favor of democratic reforms, critical of the Beijing Government or the local Chief Executive, or otherwise dissatisfied with the status quo have increasingly taken to the streets to make their voices heard. The past calendar year has seen a successful movement to resist a China-centric "national education" (*guomin jiaoyu* 國民教育) curriculum in Hong Kong schools, the ongoing activities of the "Occupy Central" 佔領中環 movement, a forty-day dock workers' strike which drew sympathy from activists and students, rallies in support of American

whistleblower Edward Snowden, and well-attended annual protests on the anniversaries of June Fourth and July First (the anniversary of the handover), despite heavy rains on both occasions. Occupy Central is further planning a large-scale "civil disobedience movement" next July in an effort to force Beijing to make good on its promise of universal suffrage.[1]

In the midst of this increasing preference for "action" 行動—and at a time when a Beijing lawmakers are warning the new M+ museum that "works that are indecent, vulgar, political and insulting are not works of art"[2]—a thick volume of poetry titled *We Are All Li Wangyang* 我們都是李旺陽 was distributed for free at the July First protest.[3] The anthology is edited by Kitty Hung 洪曉嫻 of the literary journal *Fleurs de lettres* 字花, with a preface by poet Liu Wai Tong (Liao Weitang 廖偉棠) and art by well-known illustrators such as Chi Hoi (Zhihai 智海) and Wilson Shieh (Shi Jiahao 石家豪). The more than one hundred poems collected in the anthology, many anonymous, were solicited publicly in 2012 after June Fourth labor leader and democracy activist Li Wangyang 李旺陽 (1950-2012) was allegedly "suicided" 被自殺 soon after the end of his more than twenty years of incarceration. According to the preface to *We Are All Li Wangyang*, the poems are meant to

1 Eddie Luk, "Hot talk swirls on 'occupy Central' idea," *The Standard* (25 Feb. 2013).

2 Vivienne Chow, "Artists worry government will try to control culture at new M+ museum," *South China Morning Post* (24 April 2013).

3 Hong Xiaoxian 洪曉嫻, ed., *Women dou shi Li Wangyang* 我們都是李旺陽 (Hong Kong: Chen Xiang ji tushu youxian gongsi, 2013).

serve as Li's "prison notebooks" *yuzhong shu* 獄中書,[4] and Liu Wai Tong explicitly places the book in the tradition of Lin Zhao 林昭, Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀, Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白, and Bo Yang 柏楊.[5] Despite the overtly political nature of the publication, Liu's preface draws a distinction between poetry and reality, suggesting that poetry's role in effecting political change may be limited.

> What is poetry to do in a world like this? Reality comes before poetry. However much we may talk about poetry's creativity or imagination, sometimes reality is even more absurd. Take for instance the paradoxical rhetoric of the term "suicided." When it departs from literature, it becomes an instrument of cruelty. In times like these, poetry can only resist such absurdity, can only mend the wound created in the spiritual world by such linguistic violence.
>
> 這樣一個世道詩歌何為？現實先於詩篇，我們説什麼詩歌語言的創造力、想像力，有時竟然不及現實之荒誕。比如像「被自殺」這樣矛盾的修辭，原來當它出離文學之後，就是一個殘忍的凶器。這個時候，文學就只能用以去對抗這種荒誕，去修補語言暴力給精神世界製造的創傷.[6]

On the other hand, Liu suggests that the violence of the autocratic state is not only physical, but also itself spiritual, linguistic, even poetic—the absurdity of the political system and its machinery of oppression can only find expression through the linguistic innovation of a verb simultaneously reflexive and passive, *bei zisha* 被自殺. The horror contained in that ungrammatical and paradoxical phrase is not found in a purely "linguistic violence"; it is rather the fact that only such a twisted linguistic construction can capture the terrible reality

4 "Chuban xu: Ni xiangxin qianfang you meili de ziyou" 出版序：你相信前方有美麗的自由, *Women dou shi Li Wangyang* n.p.

5 Liao Weitang 廖偉棠, "Women de yuzhongshu, women de yiyan" 我們的獄中書，我們的遺言, *Women dou shi Li Wangyang* n.p.

6 Ibid.

that makes the term so jarring. Poetry's "original sin" 原罪, according to Liu, is that it cannot "rescue him or her from a concrete coffin one meter by two meters" 在一米乘兩米的水泥棺材裡救出他或她, such as the one Li was reportedly placed in at times during his imprisonment, but there is also a small measure of redemption possible. "We can only write our poems with care, make a poem perfect and whole despite the impossibility of the situation; this act itself is a challenge against savage tyranny" 我們只能寫好一首詩，在不可能的狀態下去令一首詩完美，這種行為本身就是對野蠻暴政的一種挑戰.[7] The purpose of poetry put forward by this volume is not only to record and to protest; poetry itself is a vehicle for freedom. The publishers of the anthology, in their promotional materials and at their public events, frequently invoke a line from filmmaker Rita Hui Nga Shu's (Xu Yashu 許雅舒) contributed poem: "You believe that there is beautiful freedom in front of you" 你相信前方有美麗的自由.[8]

Whether Liang Qichao or Hu Shi, the motivation behind the establishment of New Poetry—the very purpose of the "revolution in the realm of poetry," of renovating "language, words, genres, and formal conventions"[9]—was the promise of freedom. On the other hand, this dissertation has taken as a methodological premise Althusser's words, that the ideological will never announce itself as such, but rather denigrates ideology; the attention to literary

7 Ibid.

8 Xu Yashu 許雅舒, "Women dou shi" 我們都是, *Women dou shi Li Wangyang* n.p.

9 Hu Shi 胡適, "Tan xinshi" 談新詩, *Hu Shi quanji* 胡適全集 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003): 1.159; see chapter one.

form, to the structures that liberate us at the same time as they constrain us, can only follow the logic of Bian Zhilin's aphorism, that "freedom is the recognition of necessity" 自由是對於必然的認識.[10] Many Hong Kong locals were perplexed when Edward Snowden fled Hawaii for Hong Kong in May, claiming it was because of Hong Kong's "spirited commitment to free speech and the right of political dissent,"[11] but maybe the lesson is that freedom, like ideology, does not announce itself as such. Maybe poetry can grant some degree of beautiful freedom: never absolute, but never absent.

The Musical Turn

If language is a prison-house, maybe an iron house, then human existence is simultaneously imprisoned by countless languages, countless airtight structures that enslave us even as they permit us the only freedom we can know. Deconstruct one binary system and find yourself trapped in another; mount any opposition too successfully and end up recuperated by the very system you opposed. Poetry's potential for resistance or subversion is just like that of any human action, limited—but also nonzero, and the prison-house itself may allow a certain amount of "play" (in the Derridean sense), on the inside if not the outside. David Lidov takes the "linguistic turn" and turns it another 180 degrees when he

---

10 Bian Zhilin 卞之琳, "Wancheng yu kaiduanjinian: Wen Yiduo bashi shengchen" 完成與開端：紀念詩人聞一多八十生辰, *Ren yu shi: yijiu shuoxin* 人與詩：憶舊説新 (Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian, 1984): 15. See chapter one.

11 Julian Borger, "Edward Snowden's choice of Hong Kong as haven is high-stakes gamble," *The Guardian* (9 June 2013).

asks, inspired by Rousseau, "Is language a music?",[12] and music may serve as the concluding model for this study. The figures presented in this dissertation show a preference for wholes instead of parts, whether it is the analog icon over the digital symbol (Hsia Yü), nativizing over foreignizing translation (Hu Shi), the symbolic over the allegorical (Li Jinfa), the organic over the analytical (Zhu Ziqing), or the dialectical over the individual (Bian Zhilin). When Zhu Guangqian bases his poetics not on structures of difference but the resonances of sameness, the result may not be coherent or consistent; it may gloss over the violent ruptures of historical change, but in so doing, it permits, even temporarily, a kind of genuine confluence across illusory boundaries. For one brief moment, there is the forgetting of self, which may be the only true serenity.

August 1, 2013
Mong Kok

12 David Lidov, *Is Language a Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

Bibliography

A-Weng 阿翁. Interview with Hsia Yü 夏宇. "A-Weng wen shi" 阿翁問詩. *Xianzai shi 04* 現在詩 04 (2006): 42-49.

Ai Qing 艾青. "Shi de xingshi wenti" 詩的形式問題. *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中國現代詩論. Ed. Yang Kuanghan 楊匡漢 and Liu Fuchun 劉福春. Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1986. 17-49.

---. "Zhongguo xinshi liushi nian" 中國新詩六十年. *Wenyi yanjiu* 文藝研究 1980.5 (May 1980): 73-82.

Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays.* Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.

Barthes, Roland. *Elements of Semiology*. Trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. New York: Hill and Wang, 1968.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Shocken Books, 1969.

Bian Zhilin 卞之琳. "The Development of China's 'New Poetry' and the Influence from the West." *CLEAR* 4.1 (Jan., 1982): 152-7.

---. *Diaochong jili: 1930-1958* 雕蟲紀曆（1930－1958）. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1979.

---. "Jinri xinshi mianlin de yishu wenti" 今日新詩面臨的藝術問題. *Menglong shi lunzheng ji* 朦朧詩論爭集. Ed. Yao Jiahua 姚家華. Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1989: 134-5.

---. *Ren yu shi: yijiu shuoxin* 人與詩：憶舊説新. Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian, 1984.

---. *Shinian shicao: 1930-1939* 十年詩草：1930－1939. Hong Kong: Weiming shuwu, 1942.

---. "Wusi yilai fanyi duiyu Zhongguo xinshi de gongguo" 五四以來翻譯對於中國新詩的功過. *Yilin* 譯林 1989.4 (1989) 182-188.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theater: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Ed. and trans. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.

Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron. *The Major Works*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Caochuan Weiyu 草川未雨 [Xie Caijiang 謝采江]. *Zhongguo xinshitan de zuori he jinri* 中國新詩壇的昨日和今日. Beiping: Haiyin shuju, 1929.

Chan, Tak-hung Leo. *Twentieth-Century Chinese Translation Theory.* Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004.

Chao, Yuen Ren. "Dimensions of Fidelity in Translation With Special Reference to Chinese." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 29 (1969) 109-130.

See also: Zhao Yuanren.

Chen Houcheng 陳厚誠. *Sishen chunbian de xiao—Li Jinfa zhuan* 死神唇邊的笑－李金髮傳. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chuban she, 2007.

Chen, Jianhua. "Canon Formation and Linguistic Turn: Literary Debates in Republican China, 1919-1949." *Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm*. Ed. Kai-wing Chow et al. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2008. 51-67.

Chen Li 陳黎. *Daoyu bianyuan* 島嶼邊緣. Taipei: Huangguan wenxue chubanshe, 1995.

---. *Wo/cheng* 我／城. Taipei: Eryu wenhua, 2011.

Chen, Xiaomei. *Occidentalism*. Second edition. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

Chen Yapeng 陳雅芃. "Qingshi gaicuo ti dai xing anshi? Youren xiu youren ting" 情詩改錯題帶性暗示？ 有人羞有人挺. *Lianhe xinwen wang* 聯合新聞網. 28 July 2012: n.p. Web. 28 June 2013.

Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾. *Cheng Fangwu wenji* 成仿吾文集. Jinan: Shandong daxue chubanshe, 1985.

Chomsky, Noam. *Semantic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965.

Chow, Rey. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies.* Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Cohen, Stephen. *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism.* Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2007.

Culler, Jonathan. *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature.* New York: Routledge, 2002.

Day, Michael. "Introduction: Contemporary Chinese Poetry and Literature on the Internet." Digital Archive for Chinese Studies. 5 Dec 2003. Web. 28 Jun 2013. <http://www.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/dachs/leiden_old/poetry/>.

De Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. 2nd ed., revised. London: Methuen, 1983.

Denton, Kirk, ed. *Modern Chinese Literary Thought.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology.* Trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

Ding Wenling 丁文鈴. "Hsia Yü shiji *Fenhongse zaoyin* fangshui fangzaoyin" 夏宇詩集粉紅色噪音防水防噪音. Review of *Pink Noise*, by Hsia Yü. *Zhongguo shibao* 中國時報. 16 Sep. 2007: A14.

Dryden, John. *Virgil: The Aeneid. Translated by John Dryden. With Mr. Dryden's Introduction.* New York: The Heritage Press, 1940.

Du Xuezhong 杜學忠, Mu Huaiying 穆懷英, and Qiu Wenzhi 邱文治. "Lun Li Jinfa de shige chuangzuo" 論李金髮的詩歌創作. *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* 中國現代文學研究叢刊 1983.10 (Oct. 1983): 39-66.

Dworkin, Craig. *Reading the Illegible*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2003.

Empson, William. *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1977.

Feng Huazhan 豐華瞻. "Tan yishi de 'guihua'" 談譯詩的歸化. *Zhonghua dushu bao* 中華讀書報. 10 Dec. 1997.

Guan Jieming 關傑明. "Zhongguo xiandai shiren de kunjing" 中國現代詩人的困境. *Zhonghua xiandai wenxue daxi: Taiwan 1970-1989* 中華現代文學大系：台灣 1970－1989. Ed. Yu Guangzhong 余光中. Taipei: Jiuge chubanshe, 1989. 2.882-885.

Gunn, Edward. *Rewriting Chinese: Style and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Chinese Prose.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Guo Moruo 郭沫若. "Dangqian shige zhong de zhuyao wenti" 當前詩歌中的主要問題. *Renmin ribao* 人民日報 13 Feb. 1959.

---. *Guo Moruo shuxin ji* 郭沫若書信集. Ed. Huang Chunhao 黃淳浩. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1992.

---. "Lun shi san zha" 論詩三札. *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中國現代詩論. Ed. Yang Kuanghan 楊匡漢 and Liu Fuchun 劉福春. Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1991. 1:50-61.

---. "Tan wenxue fanyi gongzuo" 談文學翻譯工作. *Renmin ribao* 人民日報. 29 Aug. 1954. *Renmin ribao 1946-2010 dianziban* 人民日報 1946－2010 電子版. 29 Jul. 2013.

Haft, Lloyd. *The Chinese Sonnet: Meanings of a Form.* Leiden: Research School of Asian, African, and American Studies, Universiteit Leiden, 2000.

---. *Zhou Mengdie's Poetry of Consciousness*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006.

Hai An 海岸, ed. *Zhongxi shige fanyi bainian lun ji* 中西詩歌翻譯百年論集. Shanghai: Shanghai waiyu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2007.

Haiyang 海揚. "Touming de baoli meixue—Xia Yu zuixin shiji *Fenhongse zaoyin* du hou" 透明的暴力美學－夏宇最新詩集粉紅色噪音讀後. *Xuwu zuochong* 虛無作崇. 4 Jan. 2010. Web. 28 Jun 2013. <http://mypaper.pchome.com.tw/cloverfour/post/1293681261>.

Harrist, Robert E. "*Book from the Sky* at Princeton: Reflections on Scale, Sense, and Sound." *Persistence / Transformation: Text as Image in the Art of Xu Bing*. Ed. Jerome Silbergeld and Dora C.Y. Ching. Princeton: P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for East Asian Art, 2006. 25-45.

Hawkes, David. *Ch'u Tz'u: Songs of the South.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Hockx, Michel. "Links with the Past: Mainland China's Online Literary Communities and Their Antecedents." *Journal of Contemporary China* 13.38 (2004): 105-127.

---. "To *Tong* or Not to *Tong*: The Problem of Communication in Modern Chinese Poetics." *Monumenta Serica* 53 (2005): 261-72.

---. "Virtual Chinese Literature: A Comparative Case Study of Online Poetry Communities." *The China Quarterly* 183 (Sep. 2005): 670-691.

Hofstadter, Douglas. *Le ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language.* New York: BasicBooks, 1997.

Hsia Yü. See Xia Yu.

Hu Huaichen 胡懷琛. *Hu Huaichen shige conggao* 胡懷琛詩歌叢稿. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1927.

Hu Shi 胡適. *Hu Shi quan ji* 胡適全集. Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003.

---. *Hu Shi riji quanji* 胡適日記全集. Taipei: Lianjing chuban gongsi, 2004.

Huang Candao 黃參島. "*Weiyu* ji qi zuozhe" 微雨及其作者. *Meiyu* 美育 2 (1928): 211-216.

Huang, Yunte. *Transpacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲. *Renjinglu shicao jianzhu* 人竟盧詩草箋註. Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1973.

Huters, Theodor. "From Writing to Literature: The Development of Late Qing Theories of Prose." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.1 (Jun. 1987), 51-96.

Ionesco, Eugène. "The Tragedy of Language: How an English Primer Became My First Play." Trans. Jack Undank. *The Tulane Drama Review* 4:3 (Mar. 1960): 10-13.

Ji Xian 紀弦. "Xiandai shi de chuangzuo yu xinshang" 現代詩的創作與欣賞. *Ziyou qingnian* 自由青年 22.3 (1 Aug. 1959): 8-9.

Johnson, Barbara. "Taking Fidelity Philosophically." *Difference in Translation.* Ed. Joseph F. Graham. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985. 142-149.

Jones, Andrew. "Cultural Literature in the 'World' Literary Economy." *Modern Chinese Literature* 9 (1994): 171-90.

Kaplan, Harry Allan. *The Symbolist Movement in Modern Chinese Poetry*. Ph.D. dissertation. Harvard University, 1983. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1983.

Klein, Lucas. *Foreign Echoes & Discerning the Soil: Dual Translation, Historiography, & World Literature in Chinese Poetry.* Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2010. Ann Arbor: UMI,

2010.

Koss, Juliet. "The Limits of Empathy." *The Art Bulletin* v. 88, no. 1 (Mar. 2006): 139-157.

Lee, Gregory B. *Troubadours, Trumpeters, Troubled Makers: Lyricism, Nationalism and Hybridity in China and Its Others*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.

Lee, Leo. "In Search of Modernity." *Ideas Across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin I. Schwartz.* Ed. Paul A. Cohen and Merle Goldman. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Council on East Asian Studies, 1990: 109-135.

Levenson, Rosemary and Yuen Ren Chao. *Yuen Ren Chao, Chinese Linguist, Phonologist, Composer, & Author.* Berkeley: Regional Oral History Office, 1977.

Li Jinfa 李金髮. "Da Yaxian xiansheng ershi wen" 答痾弦先生二十問. *Chuangshiji* 創世紀 39 (Jan. 1975): 65.

---. Li Jinfa shiji 李金髮詩集. Chengdu: Sichuan wenyi chubanshe, 1987.

---. *Piaoling xianbi* 飄零閒筆. Taipei: Qiaolian chubanshe, 1964.

---. "Shi geren linggan de jilubiao" 是個人靈感的記錄表. *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中國現代詩論. Ed. Yang Kuanghan 楊匡漢 and Liu Fuchun 劉福春. Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1985. 1.250.

---. Yiguo qingdiao 異國情調. Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1946.

Li Liming 李立明. "Xiangzhengpai shiren Li Jinfa" 象徵派詩人李金髮. *Wentan* 文壇 316 (July 1971): 33-34.

Li Shangyin 李商隱. "Li Changji zhuan" 李長詰小傳. *Li Shangyin quanji.* Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999. 209-10.

Liang Qichao 梁起超. *Xin Zhongguo weilai ji* 新中國未來記. Zhongguo jindai xiaoshuo daxi 中國近代小說大系. Nanchang: Baihuazhou wenyi chubanshe, 1996. 1-100.

---. *Yinbingshi wenji* 飲冰室文集. Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1960.

Liao Qiyi 廖七一. *Hu Shi shige fanyi yanjiu* 胡適詩歌翻譯研究. Beijing: Qinghua Daxue chubanshe, 2006.

---. “Lun Ma Junwu yi ‘Ai xila ge’ zhong de ‘e’” 論馬君武譯哀希臘歌中的訛. *Zhongguo fanyi* 中國翻譯 27.4 (July, 2006) 27-31.

Liao Xianhao 廖咸浩. “Wuzhizhuyi de panbian” 物質主義的叛變. In *Ai yu jiegou: dangdai Taiwan wenxue pinglun yu wenhua guancha* 愛與解構：當代台灣文學評論與文化觀察. Taibei: Lianhe wenxue chubanshe, 1995. 132-171.

Lidov, David. *Is Language a Music?* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.

Lin Huanzhang 林煥彰. “Cangqi de chuan’r ruhe chuanzhe qiao” 藏起的串兒如何穿着瞧. *Shifeng* 詩風 79 (1 Dec., 1978): 40-49.

Lin Yaode 林燿德. “Jimu wantong” 積木頑童. *Yiijiusijiu yihou* 一九四九以後. Taibei: Erya chubanshe, 1986. 127-140.

Lipps, Theodore. *Consonance and Dissonance in Music.* Trans. William Thomson. San Marino, California: Everett Books, 1995.

Liu, Lydia. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity, China 1900-1937.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Liu Xie 劉勰. *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龍註. Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1960.

Lu Xun 魯迅. *Lu Xun quan ji* 魯迅全集. Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 2005.

Luo Muhua 羅慕華. “Tan Zhongguo Xiangzhengpai shi” 談中國象徵派詩. *Beiping chenbao* 19 July 1934, n.p.

Luo Qing 羅青. *Shime shi houxiandaizhuyi* 什麼是後現代主義. Taibei: Wusi shudian, 1989.

Lynn, Richard John, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Ma Junwu 馬君武. *Ma Junwu shi zhu* 馬君武詩注. Nanning: Guangxi minzu chubanshe, 1985.

Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Collected Poems and Other Verse*. Trans. E.H. and A.M. Blackmore. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Mann, Paul. *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press,

1991.

Mao Dun 茅盾. *Mao Dun wenyi zalun ji* 茅盾文藝雜論集. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1981.

Melnick, David. *Men in Aida.* Berkeley, California: Tuumba Press, 1983.

Meng Fan 孟樊. "Taiwan houxiandai shi de lilun yu shiji" 台灣後現代詩的理論與實際. *Dangdai Taiwan wenxue pinglun daxi* 當代台灣文學評論大系. Taibei: Zhengzhong shudian, 1993. 215-290.

Menwai Han 門外漢."Zai tan muqian Taiwan xinshi" 再談目前台灣新詩. *Ziyou qingnian* 自由青年 22.8 (Feb. 1960): 11-13.

Monelle, Raymond. *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music.* Chur, Switzerland: Harwood, 1992.

Moore, Hayes Greenwood. *Transfixing Forms: The Culture of Chinese Poetry and Poetics in Modern Chinese Literary History.* Ph.D. dissertation. Columbia University, 2009. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2009.

Mu Mutian 穆木天. *Mu Mutian juan* 穆木天卷. Ed. Zhou Liangpei 周良沛. Zhongguo xinshi ku 中國新詩庫 1. Wuhan: Changjiang wenyi chubanshe, 1988.

Nieh, Hualing, ed. *Literature of the Hundred Flowers.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

Owen, Stephen. *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992.

---. "Stepping Forward and Back: Issues and Possibilities for 'World' Poetry." *Modern Philology* 100.4 (May 2003): 532-548.

---. "What is World Poetry?" *New Republic* (19 Nov. 1990): 28-32.

Perloff, Marjorie. *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media.* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991.

---. "Writing as Re-Writing: Concrete Poetry as Arrière-Garde." Web. 20 Jan. 2010. <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v17/perloff.htm#2>.

Pound, Ezra. *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*. Ed. T.S. Eliot. New York: New Directions, 1968.

Prins, Yopie. “Metrical Translation: Nineteenth-Century Homers and the Hexameter Mania.” *Nation, Language and the Ethics of Translation.* Ed. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. 229-256.

Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書. *Qian Zhongshu lunxue wenxuan* 錢鍾書論學文選. Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1990.

---. “The translations of Lin Shu.” Trans. George Kao. *Twentieth-Century Chinese Translation Theory.* Ed. Tak-hung Leo Chan. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004. 104-114.

Ren Weiqing 任維清. “Tan shige de ‘menglong qingxiang’” 談詩歌的朦朧傾向. *Shandong wenxue* 山東文學 1980.12 (Dec. 1980): 71-72.

Rooney, Ellen. “Form and Contentment,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 61 (Mar. 2000): 17-40.

Saussy, Haun. “Death and Translation.” *Representations* 94.1 (Spring 2006): 112-130.

---. *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001.

---. *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetic.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.

Schmidt, J.D. *Within the Human Realm.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World As Will and Representation*. Trans. E.F.J. Payne. Indian Hills, Colorado: Falcon’s Wing Press, 1958.

Shih, Shu-mei. “Against Diaspora: The Sinophone as Places of Cultural Production.” *Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays.* Ed. Jing Tsu and David Der-wei Wang. Boston: Brill, 2010.

---. *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Shockley, Alan. *Music in the Words: Musical Form and Counterpoint in the Twentieth Century Novel.* Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2009.

Siguo 思果. *Fanyi yanjiu* 翻譯研究. Taipei: Dadi chubanshe, 1972.

Su Manshu 蘇曼殊. *Manshu waiji: Su Manshu bian yi ji sizhong* 蘇曼殊外集：蘇曼殊編譯

集四種. Ed. Su Shaozhang 蘇少璋. Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2009.

Su Xuelin 蘇雪林. "Lun Li Jinfa de shi" 論李金髮的詩. *Xiandai* 現代 3.3 (Mar. 1933): 347-352.

---. "Xin shitan Xiangzhengpai chuangshizhe Li Jinfa" 新詩壇象徵派創始者李金髮. *Ziyou qingnian* 自由青年 22.1 (July 1959): 6-7.

Symons, Arthur. *The Symbolist Movement in Literature.* New York: Dutton, 1958.

Tang Xiaobing. *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: the Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Tu Kuo-ch'ing. "The Introduction of French Symbolism into Modern Chinese and Japanese Poetry." *Tamkang Review* X.3-4 (Spring/Summer 1980): 343-367.

Van Crevel, Maghiel. *Chinese Poetry in Times of Mind, Money, and Mayhem*. Boston: Brill, 2008.

Wan Xuting 萬胥亭. "Richang shenghuo de jixian" 日常生活的極限. *Shanggong ribao Chunqiu fukan* 商工日報春秋副刊. 24 November, 1985.

---. Interview with Hsia Yü 夏宇. "Zhi wei ziji er xie" 只為自己而寫. *Xiandai shi* 現代詩 12 (July 1988): 26-33.

Wang, Ban. *The Sublime Figure of History.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Wei Ruxuan 魏如萱, perf. "Yijuan heibai yingpian turan kaishi daozhe bofang—Jimi yinyueju *Xiang zuo zou xiang you zou*" 一捲黑白影片突然開始倒著播放-幾米音樂劇 向左走向右走. Online video clip. *YouTube*. 6 May 2013. Web. 24 June 2013.

Wen Yiduo 聞一多. *Wen Yiduo quan ji* 聞一多全集. Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1994.

Wilden, Anthony. *The Rules Are No Game*. New York: Routledge, 1987.

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Wu, Shengqing. *Modern Archaics*. Unpublished manuscript.

Xia Yu [Hsia Yü] 夏宇. *Fenhongse zaoyin = Pink Noise* 粉紅色噪音＝Pink Noise. Taibei: Xia Yu chuban, 2008.

---. "Ji yizuo chongqi dianyingyuan" 記一座充氣電影院. *Xianzai shi 03* 現在詩 03 (2005).

---. *Moca/wuyimingzhuang* 摩擦·無以名狀. Taibei: Tangshan, 1995.

---. *Xia Yu shiji: Fuyushu* 夏宇詩集：腹語術. 2nd ed. Taipei: Xiandai shi, 1997.

---. Xia Yu shiji: Fuyushu, 3rd ed. Taipei: Xia Yu chuban, 2008.

---. Xia Yu shiji = Salsa. Taipei: Xia Yu chuban, 1999.

Xiao Xi 小西. "Fan yuedu de *Fenhongse zaoyin*" 反閱讀的粉紅色噪音. *Tianshi leyuan* 天使樂園. 5 Sep. 2007. Web. 24 Jan. 2010. < http://angelland.negimaki.com/blog/?p=377>.

Xiong Hui 熊輝. *Wusi yishi yu zaoqi Zhongguo xinshi* 五四譯詩與早期中國新. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2010.

Xi Mi 奚密: see Yeh, Michelle.

Yan Fu 嚴復. *Yan Fu heji* 嚴復合集. Taipei: Caituan faren Gu Gonliang wenjiao jijinhui, 1998.

Yang, Haosheng. *A Modernity in Pre-Modern Tune.* Ph.D. dissertation. Harvard University, 2008. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2008.

Yang Kuanghan 楊匡漢 and Liu Fuchun 劉富春, eds. *Zhongguo xiandai shilun* 中國現代詩論. Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1986. 2 vols.

Yaxian 痖弦. "Zhongguo Xiangzhengzhuyi de xianqu—shiguai Li Jinfa" 中國象徵主義的先驅－－「詩怪」李金髮. *Chuangshiji* 創世紀 33 (Jun. 1973).

Yeh, Catherine Vance. "Root Literature of the 1980s: May Fourth as a Double Burden." *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project.* Ed. Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Oldřich Král. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001. 229-256.

Yeh, Michelle [Xi Mi 奚密]. "Bentu shixue de jianli" 本土詩學的建立. *Chen Li wenxue canku* 陳黎文學倉庫. Web. 22 July 2013.

<http://dcc.ndhu.edu.tw/chenli/michelle2.htm>.

---. "Chayi de youlü: yige huixiang" 差異的憂慮：一個回響. *Jintian* 今天 1 (1991): 94-6.

---. "Chinese Postmodernism and the Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Poetry." *Cross-Cultural Readings of Chineseness: Narratives, Images, and Interpretations of the 1990s.* Ed. Wen-hsin Yeh. Berkeley, California: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2000. 100-127.

---. "Metaphor and *Bi*: Western and Chinese Poetics." *Comparative Literature* 39.3 (1987): 237-54.

Yu, Pauline. *The World of Wang Wei's Poetry: An Illumination of Symbolist Poetics.* Ph.D. dissertation. Stanford, 1976. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1983.

Yü, Ying-shih. "Neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment." *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, ed. Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Oldřich Král. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001. 299-326.

Yu Yuan 郁沅 and Zhang Minggao 張明高, eds. *Wei Jin Nanbeichao wenlun xuan* 魏晉南北朝文論選. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1996.

Zhang Daming 張大明. *Zhongguo xianzhengzhuyi bainian shi* 中國象徵主義百年史. Kaifeng: Henan daxue chubanshe, 2007.

Zhang Longxi. "The Letter or the Spirit: The Song of Songs, Allegoresis, and the Book of Poetry." *Comparative Literature* 39.3 (Summer 1987): 193-217.

---. *Mighty Opposites: From Dichotomies to Differences in the Comparative Study of China.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Zhang Ming 章明. "Lingren qimen de menglong" 令人氣悶的朦朧. *Menglong shi lunzheng ji* 朦朧詩論爭集. Ed. Yao Jiahua 姚家華. Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1989. 28-34.

Zhao Yiheng. "'Houxue' yu zhongguo xin baoshouzhuyi" 後學與中國新保守主義. *90 niandai de 'houxue' lunzheng* 90 年代的後學論爭. Ed. Wang Hui 汪暉. Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1998. 137-156.

Zhao Jingshen 趙景深. "Li Jinfa de *Weiyu*" 李金髮的微雨. *Xin wenxue guoyan lu* 新文學過眼錄. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004. 139-142.

Zhao Yiheng 趙毅衡. "'Houxue' yu Zhongguo xin baoshouzhuyi" 後學與中國新保守主

義. *Jiuling niandai de 'houxue' lunzheng* 90 年代的後學論爭. Ed. Wang Hui 汪暉. Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1998. 137-156.

---. "Women xuyao bu yige 'yuyan zhuanzhe' ma?" 我們需要補一個「語言轉折」嗎？ *Yijiusijiu yihou* 一九四九以後. Ed. Wang Dewei 王德威, Chen Sihe, 陳思和, and Xu Zidong 許子東. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2010): 313-323.

Zhao Yuanren 趙元任. Yuyan wenti 語言問題. Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue wenxueyuan, 1959.

See also Chao, Yuen Ren.

Zhao Yuanren 趙元任 [Yuen R. Chao] and Hu Shi 胡適 [Suh Hu]. "The Problem of the Chinese Language." The Chinese Students' Monthly 11 (1916). 437-443, 500-509, 567-593.

Zheng Min 鄭敏, "Shijimo de huigu: Hanyu yuyan biange yu Zhongguo xinshi chuangzuo" 世紀末的回顧：漢語語言變革與中國新詩創作, *Jiegou—jiegou shijiao: yuyan, wenhua, pinglun* 結構—解構視角：語言．文化．評論 (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 1998): 91-120.

Zhong Jinwen 鍾敬文. "Li Jinfa di shi" 李金髮底詩. *Yiban* 一般 1.12 (15 Dec., 1926): 616-7.

Zhou Yuliang 周與良. "Huainian Liangzheng" 懷念良錚. *Yige minzu yijing qilai* 一個民族已經起來. Ed. Du Yunxie 杜運燮, Yuan Kejia 袁可嘉, and Zhou Yuliang 周與良. N.p.: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe 江蘇人民出版社, 1987.

Zhou Zuoren 周作人. *Zhou Zuoren yiwen quanji* 周作人譯文全. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2012.

Zhu Bangfu 朱邦復. *Zhongwen diannao mantan* 中文電腦漫談. Taibei: Quanhua keji tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 1982.

Zhu Guangqian 朱光潛. "Xinshi cong jiushi neng xuexi de xie shenme" 新詩從舊詩能學習的些甚麼. *Guangming ribao* 光明日報. 24 November, 1956.

---.*Yiwen zatan* 藝文雜談. Hefei: Anhui renmin chubanshe, 1981.

---. *Zhu Guangqian quan ji* 朱光潛全集. Hefei: Anhui sheng jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987.

Zhu Weiji 朱維基, trans. *Tang Huang* 唐璜. Shanghai: Shanghai yiwen chubanshe, 1978.

Zhu Ziqing 朱自清. "Daoyan" 導言. *Zhongguo xin wenxue daxi* 中國新文學大系. Hong Kong: Xianggang wenxue yanjiu she, 1972. 8.1-8.

---. *Xinshi zahua* 新詩雜話. Hong Kong: Taiping shuju, 1963.

---. "Yi ming" 譯名. *Fanyi yanjiu lunwen ji* 翻譯研究論文集 (Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 1984): 39-58.

Zukovsky, Louis, and Celia Zukovsky, trans., and Paul Zukovsky, composer. *Catullus Fragmenta.* London: Turret Books, 1969.